Akademie der Künste
der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik

Arbeitshefte

Sektion Bildende Kunst

Sektion Darstellende Kunst

Sektion Literatur und Sprachpflege

Sektion Musik

Paul Robeson

April 9, 1898 – January 23, 1976 For His 80th Birthday

Published by
Brigitte Boegelsack

30

Periodical edited by the
Präsidium der Akademie der Künste der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik

Editorial Secretary:
Dieter Rix

Advisory Editorial:
Paul-Robeson-Komitee der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik
Prof. Dr. Franz Loeser, Prof. Dr. Horst Ihde

Editor of this number:
Brigitte Boegelsack

Distributed by: Henschelverlag Kunst und Gesellschaft, Berlin

Ag 504/13/79 DDR
EVP 7,– M

Arbeitsheft No. 30

PAUL ROBESON

April 9, 1898 – January 23, 1976

For His 80th Birthday

Published by
Brigitte Boegelsack

Academy of Arts of the German Democratic Republic
Berlin 1978

Contents:

I. WHERE ONE IS ENSLAVED, ALL ARE IN CHAINS

To the Black Champion of Mankind 7
By ALBERT NORDEN

Paul Robeson, His Song - His Weapon 7
By FRANZ LOESER

Paul Robeson and His Background 8
By JOHN HENRIK CLARKE

Racism and War 9
By JOHN PITTMAN
published in "new perspectives"
Journal of the World Peace Council, No. 4/1977

Paul Robeson's Struggle Against Racism and Fascism 11
By WILLIAM PATTERSON

Paul Robeson and the World Revolutionary Process 13
By CLAUDE M. LIGHTFOOT

Champion of National Liberation and Internationalism 14
By LLOYD L. BROWN

Paul Robeson - a Fighter for Human Rights 16
By BRIGITTE BOEGELSACK

II. ART IS WEAPON

The Negro Renaissance and Paul Robeson's Development as an Actor and Singer 20
By HORST IHDE

American Press Notices 25
published 1924-1926

The Black Liberation Movement and American Drama 26
By EBERHARD BRUENING

A Great Personality 30
Excerpt from an Interview with Paul Robeson
By T. THOMPSON
published in "The Millgate", London 1930

Reflections on O'Neill's Plays 31
By PAUL ROBESON
published in "Opportunity", December 1924

Paul Robeson's Shakespearian-Debut 32
Interview by R. C.
published in "The Era", London, May 21, 1930

Paul Robeson Told Me 33
Interview by JULIA DORN
issued by Theatre Arts Committee, July-August, 1939

Robeson's Contribution to British Working-Class-Culture 33
By DIANA LOESER

III. SOLIDARITY - POWER OF THE WORKING CLASS

Interview with Paul Robeson in Spain 1938 35
By NICOLAS GUILLEN
First published in "Mediodia", Cuba, 1938

ROBESON Calls for Aid to Negroes Defending Democracy in Spain 36
published in "The Negro Worker", June, 1937

The Crusade to End Lynching 36
Speech by PAUL ROBESON
over Mutual Broadcasting System, Washington, D. C. September 23, 1946

"Digging in for the Winter", Say Striking Longshoremen 37
published in "ILWU Dispatcher"+, San Francisco, October 18, 1946
+ (International Longshoremen and Warehousemen Union)

From Proceedings of the International Fur- and Leather Workers Convention, May, 1948 37
PAUL ROBESON'S Speech

Statement at a Press Conference of the Council on African Affairs 39
By PAUL ROBESON
New York, July 20, 1949

PAUL ROBESON: My Answer
As Told to Dan Burley 40
published in "New York Age", September 1949

The Voice of America 42
By JUAN MARINELLO
published in "Daily Worker", September 1, 1950

Right! 42
By W. E. B. DUBOIS
published in "Negro Digest", March 1950

Paul Robeson in Canada 43
By SYDNEY GORDON

Speech at Peace Arch Park 1953 44
By PAUL ROBESON

An Orange Crate instead of McCarthy 45
Recollection by CHARLES R. ALLEN, Jr.

IV. FREEDOM AND FOOD FOR AFRICA

Paul Robeson and His Relations to Africa 46
By ALEX LA GUMA

"Here I Stand" (Excerpt) 47
By PAUL ROBESON

Conference of the Council on African Affairs on the Relations of the American People and their Government to Africa's Place in the War and in the Post-War World, April 14, 1944 48
Speech by PAUL ROBESON

Madison Square Garden Rally. June 6, 1946 49
sponsored by the Council on African Affairs Speech by PAUL ROBESON

A Magical Presence 50
Recollection by ALBERT MALTZ

A MESSAGE 50
from the Chairman of the Council on African Affairs September 1949

Food and Freedom for Africa 50
A Message from PAUL ROBESON
published in "Daily Worker", June 5, 1946

PAUL ROBESON'S Statement on behalf of the Council on African Affairs, concerning the Justice Department's Order for that Organization to Register under the McCarran Act 51
New York, April 24, 1953

V. HERE I AM HUMAN BEING - MEETINGS WITH THE SOVIET UNION

"I Breathe Freely" 52
Interview with Paul Robeson in Moscow
By JULIA DORN
published in "New Theatre", July 1935

Robeson and the Struggle of the Afro-Americans for Liberation 53
By IGOR GEYEVSKI

Open Letter to Soviet Writer Boris Polevoi 53
By PAUL ROBESON
published in "Masses and Mainstream", October 1954

The Kidnapping of Paul Robeson 55
By FRANZ LOESER
published in "Die Weltbühne", No. 14/1977

Moscow Acclaims Paul Robeson 56
By SAM RUSSELL
Moscow, August 16, 1958

Heartwarming Memories 56
By SHIRLEY GRAHAM DUBOIS

My Memories of Paul Robeson 56
By HILDE EISLER

VI. A VICTORY OF THE INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

Paul Robeson Singing Again, Great, Powerful 58
Press Notice, published in "Union",
Sacramento, California, October 27, 1957

Robeson Makes Triumphal Return 58
By THOMAS ALBRIGHT
published in "San Francisco Chronicle", February 10, 1958

Paul Robeson Sings and Lectures in Carnegie Hall 58
By HAROLD C. SCHONBERG

Purely Personal!
London - just before Christmas, 1958 59
By ESLANDA ROBESON

VII. PAUL ROBESON'S LEGACY

Paul Robeson 60
By JAMES BROWN
reprint from "FREEDOMWAYS", No. 3/1976

The Voice of Paul Robeson 60
By VLADIMIR POZNER
published in "Die Weltbühne", 1976

Paul Robeson's Legacy in the German Democratic Republic 60
By BRIGITTE BOEGELSACK

Notes on the Authors 65

I. WHERE ONE IS ENSLAVED, ALL ARE IN CHAINS

To the Black Champion of Mankind
By ALBERT NORDEN

In Paul Robeson we honour one of the outstanding men of this century. Great are the people who selflessly strive for higher aims, who come decisively and loyally to the fore in social and national liberation movements. Among them is Paul Robeson who for decades has stood in the front ranks of Black Americans and emancipation carried forward the torch of social with his great art and unyielding spirit has.

Son of a slave, an anti-fascist who opposed the nazis in Berlin and who stood in the battle against European fascism in the trenches of Spain, world-renowned singer for peace who grappled with the racists in the USA, who gave such convincing and overwhelming testimony for the accused Communist Party there that the judge refused to accept his statement for the record. Paul Robeson' s statements could be kept from the records of the court but never out of the records of history.

The generations succeed each other but the struggle remains the same. Age makes room for youth. Forty-five years separate Paul Robeson from Angela Davis. The torch lit by the gifted artist and militant freedom singer will be carried forward by the new youth of Black and White America, whose symbol Angela Davis has become. The freedom struggle produces such heroes who are a precious possession of mankind. Reaction persecutes them but the people love them. We must preserve their lives and stand, militant, at their sides.

Paul Robeson, His Song – His Weapon
By FRANZ LOESER

At April 9th, 1978, we celebrate Paul Robeson' s 80th birthday. The World Peace Council has declared this jubilee as an International Memorial Day. At this day not only his personal friends but millions of progressive people in the whole world will appreciate the legacy of this excellent personality. But his enemies too, that forces which make uncertain the further history as they did in Robesons lifetime, that forces have to remember his black inexorable opponent although with aversion. And this is good, because the fight for life and death of the human beings continue in undiminished intensity.

We hope that our publication will contribute to a deeper and more universal understanding of the great significance of Paul Robeson for this struggle, as a leading representative of Black America, as a Marxist-Leninist theoretican, as a political propagandist, as a freedom fighter, folk singer and actor. It is also an expression of our solidarity.

What is it that indissolubly links the name of Paul Robeson with the struggle of progressive mankind in our time, that makes him a model for the generation in struggle against imperialism?

Paul Robeson ist one of the first representatives of the movement of Black America who successfully mapped out a consistent scientific road for the liberation of his people from imperialism. Along with his friend and comrade William DuBois, Paul Robeson was one of the first leaders of Black Americans to recognize the fundamental importance of the working class for the liberation of his people from imperialism. He was also one of the first representatives of his people to percieve that the inhuman persecution and oppression of Black Americans and other racial minorities in the USA is not just a racial but predominantly a class question which can only be fully resolved by the establishment of a Socialist society. He therefore opposed every attempt to separate or isolate the struggle of Black Americans from that of the American working class or to bring about a split between white and black workers. He recognized that such attempts, however skillfully camouflaged as progressive, benefit only the exploiters and are disastrous for the Movement of Black Americans and for the American people.

Robeson knew that the victory over imperialism depends not on the good will of people alone, on their hatred of exploitation and war, on their dreams of a society worthy of man, but that it also requires a scientific theory - that developed by Marx, Engels and Lenin. Bitter experience of the class struggle had taught him that the struggle against imperialism must be organized scientifically and carried through systematically. Robeson was never deluded by the attempts of American imperialism to use anti-Communism and anti-Sovietism to lead his people astray and to weaken the unity of our international movement. In word and song he repeatedly emphasized the immense significance of the Soviet Union for the struggle of progressive America and his entire life was dedicated to friendship with the Soviet Union. American monopoly capital tried everything to divert Robeson from his road, to corrupt him, intimidate him and force him to his knees. But in all the years of extraordinarily complicated class struggle Robeson never once deviated in theory or in practice from the principles of Marxism-Leninism. From this alone it can be seen that Robeson saw further and more clearly and campaigned scientifically and effectively than could be expected from a leading Black American at that time. Despite this, his great historical significance in the struggle against imperialism can only be explained in relation to his art. Robeson understood that the people can never be won and mobilized for the struggle against imperialism with scientific facts alone and his own ability to link the rational and the emotional in his propaganda work and to place his art at the service of the class struggle was almost unparalleled. He coined the slogan "My song is my weapon", behind which lies the Marxist-Leninist theory of art which he could only realize by consistent opposition to imperialist and revisionist conceptions of art.

Robeson rescued the culture of Negro Americans, particularly their songs and spirituals, from official ostracism and brought it into the concert halls of America and he further enriched his art by drawing on the cultural heritage of the international proletariat. Robeson is the patriarch of the American political song movement - the movement which produced Pete Seeger, which provided the decisive stimulation for our contemporary political songs and which today inspires millions in the anti-imperialism struggle.

Robeson' s political effectiveness in the antiimperialist movement has seldom been surpassed; it springs from his special combination of outstanding acting ability, a unique and unforgettable voice, the great human warmth of his personality, his strength of character, the power of his deep conviction of the truth of Marxism-Leninism, his devotion to his people coupled with his loyalty to proletarian internationalism together with his unshakeable militancy in the face

of nationalism, chauvinism and racism and in the cause of world peace.

In the GDR, in crass contrast to the FRG, Robeson saw many of his ideals being implemented, ideals for which he has fought all his life. One unforgettable event is the concert, held in the Berlin Sports Hall in October 1960, at which Paul Robeson has been awarded with the "Star of Friendship Among the Peoples". After this concert Robeson said to me: "When I looked into the eyes of thousands of young people, when I felt the conviction, the devotion and passion with which they espouse the cause of progressive America, I became deeply conscious of the mighty transformation which has taken place in the minds of people in the German Democratic Republic. Racism, chauvinism and nationalism have been overcome in this part of the world once and for all. What was an unattainable dream for thousands of years you have been able to bring about in twenty years. But what are twenty years in the history of mankind? A fraction of a second!"

This explains not only Robeson's great importance for our joint struggle with all peace-loving people against imperialism but also the high appreciation, which people of our republic feels for his life and work.

Paul Robeson and His Background
By JOHN HENRIK CLARKE

Until we can understand what happened in the 15th and in the 16th centuries with the rise of Europe in the attempt to adjust the slave trade in the colonial system that followed, we are not going to understand what Paul Robeson was opposing. What he was opposing was an essential thing, - with the rise of the slave trade, with the rise of colonialism and with the rise of capitalism - that is the inhumanization of most of the world's people in order to justify the existence of that system.

What Paul Robeson was saying with his life, with his songs is, that I am a human being. I came from a people who have a culture, I came from a people with a past and so, therefore, I came from a people with a future.

Now, this situation would come into being when there was an attempt to justify the mass of labour taken out of Africa to open up the so-called New World. And yet the tradition in which Paul Robeson found himself was not particularly new, because his people fought to keep from getting on the boats, they fought on the boats, and they fought to keep from getting off from the boats, and they got off from the boats and continued to fight. He came out of a tradition of resistance and this tradition of resistance is as old as the business of the trade itself. And what he is reflecting is several demensions of the impact of Black Americans on the so-called New World.

There were several impacts, the first two have been totally ignored. The first impact was the obvious pre-colonial presence of Africans in the New World. The second impact: the number of black explorers, sailors, technicians, with the Spanish conquistadores. These were people who made a mark, African people, on America before 1619, the formal beginning of slavery in Virginia.

He also comes out of that tradition of resistance that started with the massive slave revolts in the 19th century, the most noted of which were those led by Denmark Vesey, Nat Turner and Gabriel Prosset. After these revolts the Blacks would produce a small thinking class, a small class of freed men or escaped Blacks who had learned how to read. And learning how to read, they would address themselves to different aspects of his problem. These were the petitioners. I mention this solely because Paul Robeson in many ways was a man, who in addition to asserting himself, petitioned a society for the recognition of his manhood. And as these traditions were set in motion fully a hundred years before the birth of Paul Robeson, these traditions developed among the black abolitionists in the period leading to the conflict that is called the Civil War, and after the Civil War.

He never forgot the tradition of the black ministers, and some of the most dynamic of these black ministers, Bishop Turner, Bishop Harley, men around Frederick Douglass, Samuel Ringleworth, Henry Harlem, and so on. These men used religion as an instrument of force for liberation as Paul Robeson would later use his art as an instrument for liberation and for the restoration of the basic dignity of a whole people.

When he was born in 1898, black people were trying to recover from the betrayal of the Reconstruction. That experiment in democracy that lasted only about eleven years until the South and the North got together and went back on their promise. He was born just at a time when the whites had appointed a leader for Black America, a leader named Booker T. Washington. And he was the first of a number of leaders that whites would pick out from among us and appoint as a leader and filter all information and moneys through him as an element of control.

When he was growing up in America, he grew up at a time when W. E. B. DuBois and other black radicals had established the Niagara movement that had become the NAACP. When he began his studies at Rutgers University on the eve of the First World War, Blacks were going through a period of illusions and a period when they seriously questioned their role in this country. As he developed and began to make a name for himself on the stage and began to use his art as a instrument of awakening in his people a sense of pride in their tradition, Blacks were beginning to lose faith in themselves as a people, principally because the depression was setting in and we had no national voices of consequence. W. E. B. DuBois had retired to Atlanta University and was teaching. His difficulties with the NAACP had destroyed part of his effectiveness within that organization, but it was Paul Robeson in the thirties, who would project with his art and who would use art as an instrument, who would fashion it into a symbol of struggle.

In his work with the Council on African Affairs he would, with others, call attention to the role of Africa in world affairs, the colonial system in Africa. And the Council on African Affairs would help to set in motion the ideological basis for the freedom explosion in Africa.

In the issue of "Freedomways" (No. 1-1971), we tried to make an assessment of Paul Robeson's life, using as many dimensions as we can. We have tried to look at him as a great cultural figure. We tried to take it beyond just being a singer. We made an assessment of his role in the movies, his role as an aspiration to two generations of black youth and as we assessed it, something came to our mind: it is that Paul Robeson helped to bring Black people in America to where they are right now!

A better understanding of Paul Robeson may well move us beyond where we are right now. We are people literally rehearsing for nation building, rehearsing for nationess, we are standing on what I call the black and beautiful plateau and we have to find a way to move beyond the blackness. What we are learning, because we are understanding what he was and what he intended for us to be more and more, we are learning that being black and beautiful is not quite enough, because the world is not ruled by blackness or beauty. The world is ruled by people who know how to have power. We are learning that our weakness is more the cause of our trouble than our blackness and we are looking around for allies, because we know that if we are going to make the new age of man, we are going to have allies.

Now take the example of Paul Robeson reaching out

to become concerned not just with Black workers but with workers all over the world. He gave his people a picture that they need. And they need to know that all white people are not their enemies, that there are white people suffering some of the same things they are suffering and that they are potentially an ally for the Blacks in making that kind of a world where no man need walk in fear.

At college I teach both black and white students and that's a very good teaching experience. One of my white students I once gave examples of the kinds of papers I wanted. She chose to write on the origins of Egypt, and I told her that, if you look at history honestly you're going to discover something that's going to shock you very much. If you look at the history of African people honestly you are going to have to find out something about the impact of Blacks on early civilization. You are going to have to find out that the actual Egyptians were not white people, they came from the central African and then, kind of to tease her, I said that you are also going to have to find out that Cleopatra did not look like Elizabeth Taylor.

What I am trying to get across is, there are so many young white students and white people with no vested interest in maintaining all of the garbage about race, because they have no vested interest in maintaining it. They are potential allies of the Black people and our struggle for the kind of world where no man need walk in hunger and where man can walk in peace. I think because they do not have, and very few of the young Black people have, any vested interest in maintaining capitalism, they might build a world-wide socialist system that will have some brotherhood that man can respect.

They might rule, building this, and through the inspiration of a life like Paul Robeson's, make the kind of a world where no man need to celebrate his colour and no man need to apologize for his colour. This new age of man, where men can look at other men from other nations with different religions and with different culture and say 'brother'. This may well be the finishing of the mission of Paul Robeson by the youth of his generation, and it might well be part of the legacy that his people will leave the world.

Racism and War
By JOHN PITTMAN
published in "new perspectives" Journal of the World Peace Council, No. 4/1977

Peace activists around the world are understandably concerned over present-day racist activities. Historical research long ago established the link between aggressive war and racism. The two are inseparably connected.

The link has existed since the 15th century, when racism first appeared on the world scene together with what Karl Marx called the "idyllic proceedings" that "signalized the rosy dawn of the era of capitalist production". At that time racism became an integral ingredient of primitive accumulation and a production relation of nascent capitalism. It developed alongside of "the discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement and entombment in mines of the aboriginal population, the beginning of the conquest and looting of the East Indies, the turning of Africa into a warren for the commercial hunting of black-skins"[1], as Marx described those mementoes of capitalism's advent. Racist practice begot racist ideology, which attributed historically and socially determined distinctions among peoples to immutable physical and psychical hereditary causes, and denied the humanity and right to equality of specific peoples as a rationale for their annihilation and enslavement.

Coinciding with "the awakening of national life and national movements, the struggle against national oppression, and the creation of national states"[2], as Lenin characterized one of the tendencies of developing capitalism, racist practice and ideology were enlisted by the ruling classes as auxiliaries of chauvinism and jingoism in the service of national oppression. Engels wrote of the "hatred" instilled among the English workers for the subjugated and dispossessed Irish. And Lenin wrote: "The long, centuries-old history of the suppression of the movements of the oppressed nations, and the systematic propaganda in favor of such suppression coming from the 'upper' classes have created enormous obstacles to the cause of freedom of the Great-Russian people itself, in the form of prejudices, etc."[3]

During the 18th and 19th centuries, racism developed in the course of wars of aggression and conquest that partitioned the planet among a number of colonial empires. Racism was a pillar of colonialism, a colonialist production relation ultimately determining the connections between the colonizers and colonized in colonial society as a whole as well as in material production.

Monopoly capitalism further strengthened and extended the link, while simultaneously attempting to conceal it. It camouflaged aggression as a "civilizing mission", and the subjugation, plunder and exploitation of peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America as "the white man's burden". Thus, racist ideology was elaborated to serve imperialism as a pretext for as well as a justification of conquest and pillage, rapine and enslavement.

As class conquests multiplied in the developed capitalist countries, racism gradually superseded religious fanaticism - as in the case of anti-Semitism and Zionism - in the capitalist arsenal for misleading and dividing the working people. Ruling classes even used it to justify the workers' oppression and exploitation. Marx took notice of this usage, writing in a letter to Laura and Paul Lafargue on March 5, 1870: "Some ten years ago a certain M. de Gobineau published a work in four volumes. "On the Inequality of Human Races", written to prove in the first instance that members of 'the white race' are like gods among the other human races and, of course, the 'noble' families within the 'white race' are in turn the flower of this elite."[4]

Hence racism, having originated in the aggressions of Europeoid against Mongoloid, Negroid and Australoid peoples, was extended during the process of national consolidation not only to ethnically different peoples belonging to the same major racial division of humankind, but also to the working masses as a means of ruling class oppression and exploitation. Following the 1917 October Revolution in Russia, racism was joined with anti-communism as the twin major pretexts for imperialist aggression.

In the 1930s and 1940s, German fascism and Japanese militarism, each employing these twin pretexts for its specific class aims, combined to achieve world hegemony by force of arms. This made the link universally and conspicuously clear. And the genocidal character of United States imperialist aggression in Korea and Indochina, utilizing the same twin pretexts, further disclosed the relationship.

The history of the link between wars of aggression and racism is also the history of the development of interconnections between opposing tendencies. The common origins and intertwining of the class roots of aggressive war and racism formed the objective basis of joint struggles against both. Throughout the five centuries of capitalism, the convergence of these struggles has deepened and expanded.

Today, in the last quarter of the 20th century, the necessity for joint struggles for peace and for realization of conditions of factual equality and cooperation

among all peoples of our planet, regardless of race, color or other biological distinctions, is affirmed by international law and world public opinion. It is incorporated in the constitutions and legal codes of a number of states. The United Nations and numerous other international as well as national organizations of diverse composition and aims join racism and aggressive war in their programmatic documents and campaign actively against both. Organizations of the peace movement, in particular, combine their activities against both.

The communique and the appeal of the World Congress of Peace Forces in Moscow, October 1973, declared: "It is imperative to eradicate all forms of discrimination based on race, ethnics sex, language or religion." and to "work for the complete and unconditional implementation of the many UN resolutions on the elimination of colonialism, apartheid and other forms of racism." Again, meeting in Moscow from January 14 to 16, 1977, the World Forum of Peace Forces, considering ways and means of curbing the arms race, linked the stabilization and strengthening of international detente to the abolition of colonialist, racist and fascist regimes.

The necessity for joining struggles against wars of aggression and racism has also been explicitly and implicitly stated in documents of a number of other recent international conferences. It is incorporated in the Final Act ot the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, signed by the leaders of 33 European countries, and the USA and Canada on August 1, 1975; in the Political Declaration, Economic Declaration and resolutions of the Fifth Non-Aligned Nations' Summit Conference at Colombo, Sri Lanka, August 19, 1976, which embodied the consensus of the 86 member states of the non-aligned movement; in the Havana Declaration of the Conference of the Communist Parties of Latin America and the Caribbean (June 9-13, 1975), reflecting the ideological and political unity of 24 Communist and Workers' Parties of that region; and in the Document of the Conference of the Communist and Workers' Parties of Europe, adopted at Berlin (June 30, 1976) by the leaders of 29 Communist and Workers' Parties of Europe. From this it seems that the abolition of racism and all forms of racial discrimination is now viewed by an overwhelming majority of humankind as a prerequisite for lasting peaceful coexistence, as an essential aim of struggles to stabilize and strengthen international detente.

In view of the universality of this subjective precondition for abolishing racism and wars of aggression, the attention of peace activists focusses on the causes of the continued existence of both and ways and means of eradicating them. Historical experience has shown that the 1917 October Russian Revolution, by ending human exploitation, initiated the uprooting of racism and the liquidation of classes and groups interested in wars of aggression throughout the socialist community.

Decolonization, which followed the defeat of the fascist militarist aggressors, further reduced the geographical and objective bases of racism and the possibilities of its utilization by neocolonialism. The balance of world forces now favoring the three currents of the world revolutionary process impedes the launching of aggressive war. Yet, hotbeds of racism and racial discrimination still exist, spewing their venom of misanthropy, rapine and genocide into the international atmosphere, inflicting untold miseries on hundreds of millions of people, provoking civil strife and inciting international conflict.

The consequences of racism anywhere in the world are international and universal, exempting no country nor any people, however relatively homogeneous ethnically or free of racism within its society. This is because racism is embodied in the relations of interdependence of the world market and the international division of labor; in the exchange of commodities, many of which are produced under conditions of racism; in the appropriation and exploitation of the resources of less developed countries by monopoly capital and its multinational monopolies; in the unequal terms of trade between the less developed countries and the advanced capitalist countries. Besides, a racist policy of any state is a source of tension and aggressive tendencies towards other states, a source of international insecurity and potential conflict.

Contemporary racism, while inherent in capitalist societies, derives its present potential for class and national oppression and as a threat to peace from imperialism, in the first place from U. S. imperialism Take the case of racism in southern Africa. An appalling spectacle of this decade of the 1970s is the unanimity with which the power-elites and communication media of the developed capitalist states, while flaunting their pretensions of devotion to human rights, have concerted their voices and actions to salvage the class substance of apartheid. There is a glaring disparity between their anxious solicitude for the white minorities and their callous disregard of the sufferings of the black majorities, their portrayals of the most incorrigible arch-racists as "reasonable", "moderate" statesmen, and their vilification of the fighters against racism as "extremists" and "terrorists". It is no mere coincidence that these self-styled defenders of the so-called "free world" are armed to the teeth and are steadily proliferating the means of mass annihilation.

Contrary to the prevailing view that racism is only or mainly an ideological phenomenon, expressed in attitudes and prejudices, racism is part of the system of capitalist production relations and therefore is an integral component of the economic basis of capitalist society. Originating in the social division of labor which engenders numerous contradictions in society (class antagonism, antitheses between town and country, between mental and manual labor, and between different social groups and strata), racism adds contradictions based on ethnic and biological distinctions. The social division of labor forms the material basis of social relations; and the technical division of labor, or division of labor in the shop or plant, is gradually established in accordance with these social relations. Herein lie the class roots of racism, the material bases of the political and social institutions of segreation and racial discrimination which facilitate the political subjugation and super-exploitation of the working people of the imperialist countries, and the neo-colonialist pillage of the less developed countries. Racist prejudices and attitudes are engendered by this way of life, and its ideology arises to defend, consolidate and perpetuate the gains derived therefrom by the ruling class.

Tell-tale indices of the class roots of the racist system of political oppression and super-exploitation of the working people are the differentials between working and living conditions of the racially oppressed and super-exploited and those of other sections of population.

Participants of a symposium on "Contemporary Racism" from South Africa, Britain, FRG, Jordan, Ireland, Guatemala and the U. S. A. cited examples of these differentials. The 14-to-1 ratio of per capita incomes of white and black workers of South Africa, resulting in enormous superprofits for South African and foreign capitalists, is the real reason for the existence and preservation of apartheid.

The guest participant from the U. S. A. gave a detailed and concrete analysis of the racist technical division of labor in the automobile industry, tracing it to the racist social relations and racist ideology permeating U. S. society. While citing the differentials in working and living conditions resulting from this system, he emphasized that the white workers as well as Blacks, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, Asians and Native American Indians are victimized. Wages are depressed and speed-up is intensified for white workers, too, while the diversion of white workers from joint strugg-

les with racially oppressed workers against the monopolies and the division of the working class pays off in billions of dollars of super-profits for the monopolies.

Although racism cannot be totally extirpated under capitalism, progressive circles in capitalist countries struggle of overcome its effects. Rooted in production relations of human exploitation, its extirpation requires the abolition of these relations and the development of cooperative, collectivist relations. Historical experience shows that racism can be uprooted by changing the forms of property, which define and connect the whole system of production relations. Public ownership of the means of production and subsistence has proved to be the indispensable precondition for eradicating racism and racial discrimination. Experience of real existing socialism in countries of the Socialist Community shows that the political battlefield is the decisive theater of struggle against racism, and that its total elimination is a practicable and realizable task.

Participants in the above mentioned symposium from the USSR, GDR and Cuba outlined specific measures undertaken in their respective countries to uproot racism. Other participants cited forms of struggle in capitalist countries to mitigate the effects of racism and prepare the conditions for its extirpation. These range from armed struggle, as in South Africa, to struggles to forge working class unity, regardless of racial and ethnic differences, for abolishing segregation and discriminatory practices, making racism a punishable crime, and creating mass opposition to its use by monopoly, as in the USA, Britain, FRG and other countries.

Thus, in addition to reiterating the main historically and scientifically proven theses about racism, the symposium advanced a number of new theoretical formulations concerning the class roots of racism. Not least important was the symposium's consensus that deeper investigation and analysis and a continued exchange of experiences among ever wider circles of the peoples is necessary to speed the total liquidation of racism. And speed is essential. The continued existence of hotbeds of racism, the revival of pseudo-scientific apologetics of racism, the aggressive tendencies of the ruling classes in the countries of racial segregation and discrimination and their possession of the means of mass annihilation - all these greatly augment the urgency of joint struggles against racism and war.

(shortened)

Notes:

1 Marx/Engels, Works, Berlin 1970, Vol. 23, p. 779

2 Lenin, Works, Berlin 1968, vol. 20, p. 12

3 ibid. p. 416

4 Marx/Engels, Works, Berlin 1965, Vol. 32, p. 655

Paul Robeson's Struggle Against Racism and Fascism
By WILLIAM PATTERSON

I am from that land in which Paul Robeson was born. It is a country of glorious revolutionary traditions. It is a land that has given birth to many internationally known Black revolutionaries. Through knowledge of their heroic battles, the inspiration of the struggles of its multi-colored toiling and enslaved masses, and a wealth of experiences Paul was molded into the giant of a freedom fighter he became.

He grew to hate the degenerate genocidal racist philosophy of the ruling class of his country and the savage inhuman social relations created by its racist policies. He hated the dehumanizing force of racism, but he grew to love his country's Black heroes.

Paul was an early anti-fascist. He was ahead of his time. In the late 30's at a rally held in London in support of the then existing People's Republic of Spain, he said, "Every artist, every scientist, must decide NOW where he stands. He has no alternative. There is no standing above the conflict on Olympian heights. There are no impartial observers. Through the destruction, in certain countries, of the greatest of man's literary heritage, through the propagation of false ideas of racial and national superiority, the artist, the scientist, the writer is challenged."

Paul Robeson accepted the challenge. Had the artists, scientists and writers of the West followed him, who knows how the people would have reacted? He took his stand. He went to Loyalist Spain. He greeted the soldiers of the "Lincoln Brigade" from his homeland. He sang to the men who sought to stop Hitler at the gates of Madrid. Wherever he was, Paul opposed every phase of Hitlerism.

Paul Robeson was well aware of the price he might have to pay for taking sides against foreign policies of the U. S. government. He knew well that government's vicious record of lynching and savage barbarism against Blacks who sought to reconstruct the South after the Civil War. He knew of the persecution of that great Black revolutionary Frederick Douglass. But as he had taken his stand beside his own people, he now took his stand besides those in Spain and elsewhere who were fighting for a new world.

The U. S. government which refused aid to the Spanish People's Republic was finally forced to confront with arms the politics and the economics of the Third Reich. But those who rule the United States, the men who, since the Second World War, have staged bloody, genocidal, criminal wars in Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, never challenged the philosophie of Hitler, or moved seriously against his racist ideology.

The old Hitler is gone. But what a difference there is between Bonn and this Berlin. The U. S. army of occupation in Western Germany is steeped in racism at which the Bonn government winks. Its government

also supports racist regimes in South Africa and Rhodesia. Its foreign policy is not alone a flagrant breach of the decisions of the Nuremberg Nazi War Criminal Trial Court, a breach of the Charter of the United Nations, it is a breach of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and, as well, a violation of the Provisions of Occupation of Germany. Racism has become an export article. As Hitler exported anti-Semitism, U. S. imperialism exports racism and white chauvinism.

Paul said that Spain was a turning point in his life. He saw the brutally destructive character of Hitlerism as it drowned in blood a government of the Spanish liberal bourgeoisie. He saw American imperialists give aid to fascists and Nazis. He watched as the ruling class of England and France, in scorn, rejected the appeals of the Soviet Union and anti-fascists throughout the world for a united front of the progressive peoples of the world against Nazi fascist barbarism. He saw those who ruled his country ignore the appeal of Abyssinia, for aid against Mussolini. What was of extreme political importance, he saw that "the struggle for Negro rights was an inseparable part of the anti-fascist struggle." That vision is correct today.

Paul Robeson remained a great and talented artist but life as he lived and saw it made of him an artist of the true democrats and revolutionaries. Paul called upon his people to enter the ranks against Hitler, then the main enemy of all freedom-loving humanity.

That was not the first time progressive Germans and the oppressed and exploited Blacks of the United States had inter-connections. In the second half of the 19th century, a savage Civil War was raging in the United States. The historic decision whether chattel slavery would be ended was in the balance. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, from exile in England, spoke out against slavery. Both of these great revolutionists were, as you well know, Germans. But they were also deeply concerned with the American scene and its impact on the world.

Speaking to the American working class and people generally, and to their President, Abraham Lincoln, in particular, Karl Marx uttered this deathless truism: "Labor in a white skin cannot emancipate itself while labor in a black skin is branded." Karl Marx spoke then to those who were fighting slavery in the United States. His works are now relevant in every part of the world. The workers of the world, regardless of skin color, must unite in struggle. Labor in a white skin cannot attain freedom while labor in a Black, brown, red or yellow skin is branded.

The fact that Karl Marx, Frederick Engels and Frederick Douglass did never meet was unfortunate. Douglass was the greatest American of the 19th century, the leading Black revolutionary of his day and time. They were in England at the same time, but did not meet. But that is another story. In Paul Robeson's call to his people to rally to destroy Hitler and Hitlerism, there is the recognition that labor and progressive mankind, regardless of creed or color, are inextricably bound together.

Paul Robeson was in every sense of the word a student of the revolution which the Russian peoples under the Party of the immortal Lenin brought to Tzarist Russia. It was that revolution against Tzarism more than any other event in the history of mankind that exposed the hypocrisy and fraud in what men call American democracy. Speaking of the Soviet Union, Paul once said, "Well, I went to see for myself and on my first visit to the Soviet Union in 1934, I saw how the Yakuts and the Uzbeks and all other formerly oppressed nations were leaping ahead from tribalism to modern industrial economy, from illiteracy to the heights of knowledge." It was not a miracle, but a new society that Robeson saw. It worked. Paul continued, "I came to believe that the experiences of the many peoples and races of the Soviet-Union -- a vast country which embraces one-sixth of the earth's surface -- would be of great value for other peoples of the East in catching up with the modern world ... I felt too, that the rapidly growing power of the Soviet Union in world affairs would become an important factor in aiding the colonial liberation movement; and when, not long ago, the world saw how vigorously and effectively the Soviet Union moved to block Western imperialism from retaking the Suez Canal from emancipated Egypt, the truth of this view seemed amply confirmed."

Paul studied the relation of art to the struggle for the liberation of mankind. He analyzed the art of many countries, seeking zealously to find its class content. And, as he sang those songs that fired the will for freedom of oppressed peoples, those people were lifted up by the physical and spiritual inspiration which he gave them. This is one of the great lessons of Paul's life.

Paul understood the historical period that gave utterance to the spirituals, the sorrow and protest songs of his enslaved people. They were in their time an inseparable part of his people's deathless fight for freedom. As he sang, Paul made these songs contemporary. He made them part of the revolutionary heritage of the U. S. A. It was the artist-revolutionist at work. In that work, Paul Robeson has never been surpassed. What a lesson for us even today.

There is much that was spontaneous, much that was naive in those songs that came up from slavery, but Paul pointed out the difference in the era in which they were first voiced and that in which he sang them. Those songs came out of darkness but they pointed to the light. Paul carried them from yesterday into tomorrow. He understood the love of the masses for these songs that came from the tormented souls of the oppressed heroes and heroines and he applied them to the fight for freedom. Paul saw that art was related to politics and to everything else in life. His life has been guided by that thinking and acting for he saw that it moved others to struggle.

Paul studied the folk songs of many other peoples. He found in each the will to freedom. It was this research and investigation that made him see that the course of mankind's development differed only in degree. Robeson became an internationalist. He travelled throughout Europe, Africa and Asia and everywhere aligned himself with the masses of the people.

Back home he threw himself into the fierce battles of the anti-McCarthyites, who fought gloriously to stem the fascist-like legal lynch drive of the U. S. Senator from Minnesota, Joseph McCarthy. Political frame-ups were a matter of common occurrence. The great Dr. William E. B. DuBois, Black philosopher and historian, was arrested because he advocated peace. Militant labor leaders, Black men who consistently fought racism, Communists and others who fought for peace and against usurpation of the rights of the people were arrested and railroaded to prison.

Paul's life was in danger. In a little town called Peekskill in the Hudson River Valley, a grand peace and anti-McCarthy demonstration was organized. Paul was scheduled to sing, but the demonstration was smashed through hoodlums and pro-fascist elements spurred on by the local and state police. Cars were overturned, buses stoned, by-standers beaten.

With a mind to confront reaction, a second Peekskill demonstration was organized for the following week. Labor peace forces, Black militants were mobilized. Again Paul was scheduled to sing. A massive ring was formed around him by friends and admirers. Peekskill saw the unity of Black and white in America for the rights of both. The plans of reaction to murder Paul as they later murdered Malcolm X, Martin Luther King and a crop of other Black leaders were thwarted. But cold blooded murder are adding further on to the program of terror of the racists of the U. S. A.

The Second World War was over. The Nazi butchers had gone down to what looked like decisive defeat. The trial of their leading war criminals had taken place, aggressive war and racism had been condemned. The United Nations had been established. Its preamble

read: "We the people of the United Nations" are "determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war ..." and "... to respect the rights of human beings" and "of nations large and small." Robeson was to make full use of the term "we the people of the United Nations." The people of the United States were a part of that body.

However, before Robeson left Europe, he was to make a remark that threw the leading racists of the U. S. A. into a mad frenzy. Addressing a peace rally in Paris, he said, "It is inconceivable that American Negroes would fight with those who have oppressed them for generations against the Soviet Union, which, in a generation, has raised them to a position of equality."

As one of the people of the United States of America "determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war", Paul had spoken out for peace. At home, his passport was taken from him by the State Department. He was denied the right to travel and, on a national scale, every possible effort was made to restrict his right to earn a living. The idea of peace has caught the imagination of the American people. Thousands of its youth cry, "Hell, no! We won't go!" They are echoing Paul Robeson. And I say that their recognition of the monumental peace making role played by the peoples of the great Soviet Republics and other socialist countries will follow. Robeson's words have helped to bring an awakening to the people of America.

The Charter of the United Nations made a sharp impact on Paul. By its universality it carried him beyond the Constitution of the United States. Yet it spoke of "we the people". Black men, labor, women and youth were a part of that "we". Robeson brought the decisions of the Nuremberg trial of the Nazi war criminals into the picture. As the attitude of the Nazi savages to its nationals had became of profound concern to the civilized world, he saw that the attitude of America's savage racists must also become the deepest concern of all mankind. A trial of the hierarchy of racism was on the order of the day. Who should indict those gentlemen? Paul did not believe that those who had signed the U. N. Charter for the U. S. A. represented the interest of its people -- Black or white. But they controlled its courts. He believed that the people should go to the United Nations with a Petition of their own, a Petition charging the rulers of the Western world with crimes of genocide, crimes that must inevitably lead to war if not stopped. Such a Petition would not only be an anti-racist Petition, it would be a peace Petition as well. By ignoring it, the world would court its own destruction. This is the monumental significance of the Petition "We Charge Genocide -- The Crime of Government Against the Negro People" which Paul Robeson as head of a people's delegation placed before the Secretariat of the United Nations in the City of New York in 1951.

Paul's persecutors became more vicious. He was not permitted to leave the U. S. A. and in the land of his birth, presumably a citadel of capitalist democracy, every institution of government was turned against him. The government charged that to permit Robeson to travel abroad would not be in the best interests of national security. Paul had spoken in the interests of a united people, pledged to live up to its Constitution, the Charter of the United Nations and the decisions of the Nuremberg anti-war, anti-racist trial. Paul had called for an end to ghettoes and slums, an end to illiteracy, dope peddling, and all aspects of degradation of the poor. Was this not a matter of public welfare and national security?

The basis from which the genocidal attacks upon Paul Robeson were launched was of a two-fold character. He was Black. He has challenged both the foreign and domestic policies of those who ruled his country, those who had polluted and befouled its air and water and with its myths of racial superiority polluted the minds of millions of its people.

Our enemies have tried to strike Paul's exploits and achievements out of the history of the U. S. A., but they will not be hushed up forever.

Paul Robeson and the World Revolutionary Process

By CLAUDE M. LIGHTFOOT

Paul Robeson has been hailed throughout the world as one of the great geniuses of our time. His story has been told from many angles. Because he was one of the most multi-talented men of all time. But not enough has been said about his firm grasp of what is needed, not only to free his people but oppressed people everywhere.

Paul Robeson, while a patriotic citizen of his country and a staunch defender of his people in every respect, was above all a citizen of a race of people who were oppressed wherever they resided in the world. Because he never lost sight of the source of class, racial and sexual oppression, because he saw all the links that chained people together who suffered common oppression, he was all the more a champion of his own country and the oppressed people within it.

Karl Marx long ago proclaimed the slogan, "Workers of the World Unite, you have nothing to lose but your chains." In our time the theory and practice of proletarian internationalism has been the enabling act to break the chains of human oppression all over the world.

It is in this connection that the story of Paul Robeson must be told and retold.

At the end of World War II and the outbreak of the Cold War, U. S. imperialism went into the world allegedly to save the world from the horrors of communism and for the advancement of democracy. Because of a long tradition of democratic struggles and achievements in the United States at first it was easy to present the United States in this role. But Paul Robeson became a major factor in exposing the hypocritical nature of U. S. imperialism. He travelled all over the world and told people that the mirror through which the true role of U. S. foreign policy could be discovered was the treatment of its Black citizens. In 1949, he went to Paris and proclaimed that it was unthinkable that Black youth would follow U. S. imperialism and go into the world to accord to other people the inhumane treatment that they suffered from. Perhaps no statement was ever made by an American citizen abroad that aroused the American ruling class as that of Paul Robeson. The "sound and fury" it evoked was a measurement of the achilles heel of U. S. foreign policy, the status of Black Americans had become. The ruling circles reacted to the statement in two ways. On the one hand, Robeson was banned from foreign travel, and on the other he at home was submitted to all kinds of persecution. At Peekskill, New York, he was almost killed by a lynch mob.

In order to counteract the Robeson statements abroad, slavish type so called Black leaders were sent into the world by the state department to extol the virtues of U. S. democracy, especially about the great changes that were taking place in the United States in the treatment of Black people. But without exception these apologists failed in their missions. The people of the world did not believe them. In fact, in some cases they were booed and hissed off platforms.

This was the background out of which proletarian internationalism came into play around the conditions of Black Americans. As a result U. S. policy makers now conceived that in the interest of their foreign policy objectives some concessions would have to be

made to Black People. This was the background which forced the United States Supreme Court in 1954 to issue an order to desegregate the school system in the United States. The Court ruling specifically states that this act was due in large part to the international situation. The Court ruling and the struggles that followed gave social birth to Dr. Martin Luther King and ushered in a new era in the battle for Black liberation. Down through the years until today some substantial changes were made in the status of Black Americans. But these changes, important as they were, had more to do with the social aspect of Black oppression. That is, the right of Blacks to travel without being restricted, to where they set on buses, trains and planes. The right to eat in restaurants without restrictions, the right to vote in areas where they formerly were denied. These and similar relations underwent profound changes, especially in the southern part of the United States, which for centuries was the scene of some of the most dehumanizing acts in human history.

Some changes were made also in the political arena. The Black vote in many of the major cities took on a new importance. The election of Black mayors of cities, increased representation at many levels of government was greatly enhanced.

However, despite some changes in the social and political aspects of Black oppression the heart of the problem remained unchanged, and in many respects have deteriorated. That is the economic aspect. But even on this front the ruling class is making some concessions to the middle strata. There is an increase in a Black middle class which is being promoted to create disharmony among Blacks. But at the same time some capitalist corporations are drawing Blacks into white collar management, the economic condition for most Blacks steadily declines, especially Black youth.

The youth, in the decade of the sixties, made great contributions to the entire society. The sit-down movement by Black students in 1960 helped to eliminate Jim Crow all over the South. It was the forerunner to the upsurge of white students in the North and the Peace Movement which helped to halt the genocidal war in Vietnam.

In the field of sports, Black athletes have revitalized most of them.

But these achievements pale into insignificance when the plight of Black youth as a whole is viewed. A process of genocide and degradation is in evidence everywhere. Their conditions represent one of the most challenging problems in present-day America.

The problem is not new. Almost two decades ago, Dr. James B. Conant, former President of Harvard University, made a survey of Black communities and wrote a book, "Slums and Suburbs." In it, he pointed out that 70 percent of all Black high school drop-outs would not find work. He warned the nation: "We are allowing social dynamite to accumulate in our large cities." His warnings went unheeded and to this day, there is not sufficient understanding of what the plight of Black youth means for everybody, not only Blacks. Dr. Conant pointed out that the effects would spill over and affect suburbia where middle and upper class whites live. What was pointed out, at that time, has been greatly aggravated by growing crisis conditions. The positive struggles of Black youth have diminished and the negative ones accelerated. Gone are the sit-ins. Gone are the Ghetto explosions. But crime, dope and gangs have not gone. Each day, the media report some of the most horrible crimes in our community. No one is immune to the frustrations of these youth, including the most helpless - the elderly. How is the problem being handled? Unfortunately, most people see the solution via the police. Now greater police protection is a vital necessity. But we must not see this problem out of the context of others. As Frederick Douglass once said: "It is not the gentle shower we need, but a thunderstorm."

Our jails and prisons are already overcrowded, mainly with Black youth, and the number increases day by day. No, the solution is not to be found in greater police involvement. Such involvement will help but not eliminate it. Rather, the solution is connected with the whole fabric of our present day society, and until problems are tackled along such lines, there will be no real relief forth-coming. The main problem before Black youth is jobs and conditions created for a creative, purposeful life.

Black youth at home are war casualties. Ordinarily, we count such casualties only at the battlefront, but in circumstances where social needs at home are neglected to fight to keep other people in imperialist bondage, then to that extent no solution for joblessness is available and the youth become social rejects and casualties. Thus, a solution can be found for this tragic situation only through a peace program, a commitment to alleviate our problems at home as our first priority, and as our priorities are set, Black youth must be high upon the list. Otherwise, the whole of U. S. society will suffer as time goes by.

It is in this connection that the new times call for a greater emphasis of the international significance of the battle for Black liberation in the United States.

In the face of the horrendous situation of Black youth, President Carter tries to revive Cold War rhetoric about "human rights." But as in the days of Paul Robeson, "the chickens will come home to roost."

Black Americans, despite some gains, remain at the rock bottom of U. S. society. And their problems can be relieved only by a program of detente, a deescalation of the Cold War. For in this context funds can be made available for social needs in the U. S. in place of an oversized war budget. Thus the next stage of Black liberation in the United States is bound up with trends and currents all over the world. Today, unlike the time of Paul Robeson, many Black people are coming to understand an old biblical phrase, "Thou are thy Brother's keeper," is best expressed in the world-wide revolutionary process, in proletarian internationalism.

Champion of National Liberation and Internationalism

By LLOYD L. BROWN

In describing the hero of one of his plays, Shakespeare noted that "the elements so mixed in him that Nature might stand up and say to all the world: This was a man!"

That poetic description truly fitted a hero of his time: Paul Robeson was indeed such an integrated man.

I propose here briefly to discuss Paul Robeson in relation to the struggle for national liberation and the struggle for internationalism--those two great issues that became fused into a oneness in his life. Just as the artist and the citizen are indivisible in Robeson's character, his concern for his own people was inseparable from his concern for all other peoples.

Robeson's devotion to national liberation was, like his art, rooted deep in the traditions of his own people, the oppressed masses of black Americans. The son of a Negro who had escaped from plantation slavery, Paul knew at the outset of his life that for his people America was not at all the "land of the free" that is so proudly hailed in its national anthem.

The decade into which Paul was born--the 1890's--saw two American developments that would profoundly influence his adult life as a fighter for liberation at home and abroad. One development was the legalized establishment of a system of second-class citizenship

for the Negro people, who had been freed from chattel slavery 30 years earlier. This happened in 1896, two years before Paul was born, when the U. S. Supreme Court upheld as constitutional all laws that compelled racial segregation in American life. In making that decision, the Court made clear its racist thinking when it said: "Legislation is powerless to eradicate racial instincts or to abolish distinctions based upon physical difference ... If one race is inferior to another socially, the Constitution of the United States cannot put them on the same plane."

The other development was the emergence of the United States as an imperialist power. Paul was born on April 9, 1898; and the birthday of U. S. imperialism might well be given as April 25 of that year, when Congress declared war against the moribund Spanish Empire. As a result of that war the U. S. grabbed its first overseas colonies (Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Philippine Islands and other islands in the Pacific) and engaged in armed conflict for the first time against a colonial liberation movement--the so-called "Filipino Insurrection," which the U. S. Army ruthlessly suppressed.

A Negro spokesman of that time, Charles G. Baylor, wrote that the U. S. invasion of Cuba was not to liberate the Cubans but to put down their revolution which had begun, he said, "as an Afro-Cuban Socialist uprising against Spanish tyranny, capitalistic greed and rapacity." He added the profound statement, which would later often be quoted by Paul Robeson: "The American Negro cannot become the ally of imperialism without enslaving his own race."

As is happened, Robeson's first participation in the struggle against "white supremacy" was not political but cultural. At the outset of his career as a singer, he directly challenged the prevailing racist notion that Negro music was inferior; that Negro song could not be considered as art. He set out to prove that the folk music of his people was fully equal to that of any other people, and his first concert, held in New York on April 19, 1925, was a triumph both for himself as a singer and for his people's songs. For the first time in American history a concert singer had presented a program consisting entirely of Negro compositions, and the critics and audience alike hailed the singer and his songs as truly great.

Throughout the first five years of his concert career Robeson continued that cultural struggle, singing only the songs of his oppressed people to enraptured audiences all over the United States and Europe. As he put it simply in later years, when he discussed that period of his life with me, "What had to be proved, was proved." (I made a mental note that he did not use the word "I" in telling me that. Modesty is fused with his greatness.)

However, as an actor there was little opportunity for him to appear in serious roles on the American stage or screen, and so Robeson settled in England, where he became a top star as a concert singer, recording artist, and a leading actor in the theater and on film. There in England he came to see that his people, who yearned to be free and equal, were not only the Negroes of the United States. His people were also the peoples of Africa and the West Indies; and the peoples of China and India and Indonesia--indeed the vast majority of human beings, who were deemed by their colonial masters to be racially inferior.

Through his study of African history, culture and languages, and through his association with anti-imperialists from both the colonies and the controlling country, Robeson became an active supporter of the colonial liberation movements. Largely through his efforts the Council on African Affairs was established in the United States in 1937; and until the organization was outlawed in 1955, Robeson served as its chairman. Associated with him in the leadership of the Council were two other eminent black American scholars and freedom-fighters, W. E. B. DuBois and Alphaeus Hunton.

Paul also came to feel a sense of close kinship with the common people everywhere, regardless of race or nationality. In his book "Here I Stand" he told how he had learned that the true character of a nation is determined not by its ruling class but by the common people, and that the common people of all nations are truly brothers in the human family. "If in Britain", he wrote, "there were those who lived by plundering the colonial peoples, there were also the many millions who earned their bread by honest toil. And even as I grew more Negro in spirit, or African as I put it then, I also came to feel a sense of oneness with the white working people whom I came to know and love."

Together with the most progressive people of all lands, Paul became a militant antifascist in the 1930's and went to Spain to sing for the International Brigades. The spirit of unconquerable resistance that marked that period will always live in his recordings of such songs as "The Peatbog Soldiers", "The Four Insurgent Generals", and others.

When he returned to his homeland in 1939, Paul's stature as artist and fighter reached new heights and he became for many Americans, black and white, a symbol of the struggle against fascism abroad and reaction at home. He took a leading part in the militant movement to abolish lynching and win equal rights for black Americans. He also was prominently associated with the great struggles of the workers to form unions and win better conditions in the steel, auto, and other basic industries. He won the highest award given by the Negro civil rights movement, and he was made an honorary lifetime member of several large trade unions.

Then too, in the more progressive atmosphere of those days, Paul scored his greatest triumph as an actor in the play, "Othello", which had the longest continuous run of any Shakespearean production in our country. It was more than a personal success, and if today black actors are sometimes given leading role on the American stage and in films, it can be said that Robeson's artistic powers did much to open the way.

In the postwar period, Robeson's internationalism brought him into the leadership of the worldwide movement for peace that rose to meet the threat of atomic war. The present, more widespread movement for peace in America today had its roots in that first ban-the-bomb campaign in which Paul played so prominent a part.

As a singer, Robeson based his internationalism on the folk songs of other peoples, just as he had earlier expressed his ethnic consciousness through Negro folk songs. He studied many languages and added the songs of many lands to his repertoire. The concept of the oneness of mankind, of which Paul often spoke, was for him not an abstract theory but a reality that he could and did demonstrate to audiences everywhere. His beautiful voice was, of course, a gift of Nature; but his use of it and the songs he sang were a part of his conscious struggle for freedom and brotherhood.

Paul's humanism was by no means merely a matter of the heart. As a practical humanist he supported the worldwide movement towards socialism. "On many occasion," he wrote, "I have publicly expressed my belief in the principles of scientific socialism, my deep conviction that for all mankind a socialist society represents an advance to a higher stage of life--that it is a form of society which is economically, socially, culturally, and ethically superior to a system based upon production for private profit."

Paul felt at home in the socialist world. The whole world knows of Paul's close friendship with the peoples of the Soviet Union. When the cold war was at its fiercest, Paul's warm regard for the Soviet Union and

and all the other socialist countries never wavered under the intense pressure and persecution to which he was subjected. Surely one of the noblest demonstrations of true internationalism was the courageous stand that Robeson took in that time of McCarthyite terror as he, a persecuted black American, emerged in the U. S. as the most outspoken advocate of peace and friendship with the socialist countries.

In November, 1949, he boldly challenged the reactionaries who had incited mob violence against him earlier that year in Peekskill. "To those who dare question my patriotism", he said, "who have the unmitigated insolence to question my love for the true America and my right to be an American - to question me, whose father and forefathers fertilized the very soil of this country with their toil and with their bodies - to such people I answer that those and only those who work for a policy of friendship with the Soviet Union are genuine American patriots. And all others who move towards a war that would destroy civilization, whether consciously or unconsciously, are betraying the best interests of this country and the American people."

Today, after the inglorious defeat, in our country a majority of the population has come to see that the U. S. intervention in Vietnam was a terrible wrong. But Paul, the consistent national liberationist and internationalist, warned against that involvement more than twenty-five years ago, when it was a French army that was waging the war against the freedom-seeking Vietnamese people. In June, 1950, he said in a speech in Chicago: "Today we have the announcement of another program of arms shipments to destroy a movement for colonial independence - this time arms for the French imperialists to use against the brave Vietnamese patriots in what the French progressive masses call the 'dirty war' in Indochina."

"These actions of the U. S. government", he continued, "cry out to the world that our nation, born in a bloody battle for freedom against imperialist tyranny, has itself become the first enemy of freedom and the chief tyrant of the mid-century world. They warn more than half the world's population who people the vast continents of Asia and Africa that, until the course of our foreign policy is changed, they can no longer look to the U. S. government for help in their strenuous struggles for a new and independent life." How much loss of life, how much devastation would have been averted had his countrymen heeded Robeson then, at the very first sign of U. S. intervention in Vietnam!

Paul was also a forerunner of the present upsurge of black militancy in the U. S. His militant ideas in his book "Here I Stand" are demonstrating, that he was more than a decade ahead of his time. This book, published in 1958, has been republished fifteen years after its first come out.

"There will come a time, I know," wrote Maxim Gorki, "when people will take delight in one another, when each will be a star to the other, and when each will listen to his fellow as to music." In Paul Robeson we already have met a man of that bright future, a living portent of mankind's potential, a forerunner of the Age of Brotherhood towards which we aspire.

Paul Robeson – a Fighter for Human Rights
By BRIGITTE BOEGELSACK

> "The artist must decide whether he wants to fight for freedom or for slavery. I have decided, for me there is no alternative."
>
> Paul Robeson 1937

Paul Robeson clearly perceived the connexion between the arts and politics and he was clear that his art would never rise above the level of simple entertainment if he did not employ this art as a weapon in the struggle for peace and friendship amongst the peoples, against fascism and racism, thus giving it, in the process, moral and intellectual prowess.

Robeson, the son of a former slave, was educated by his father as an upright and conscious person. He underwent a humanist education and graduated from the Legal Faculty of Columbia University. He encountered racial discrimination wherever he went which had an adverse effect on his professional development as an attorney. He devoted himself to the arts, became a theatrical and film actor and his first concert - in April 1925 in New York - where he sang almost exclusively Negro spirituals, which had been arranged for him by a colored friend, was a sensation for the USA and a great success for Robeson.

But for the colored artist Robeson the United States meant he was continually subject to racial discrimination. If he himself was not struck down to such an extent he did see his black people subject to the most atrocious forms of insult and degradement. Moreover the possibilities for a colored artist were very restructed. It was only a piece of luck if one found some sort of part in a theatrical performance or on the screen but, with very few exceptions these were then the traditional stereotype depictions of Blacks. When the producers did not offer him any sensible roles in pieces the content of which and form were acceptable to a conscious colored person Robeson decided to leave the States.

In 1927 he moved to London. He was applauded by English society as an intelligent and many-sided artist and made a name for himself in the theatre and in films; in concert halls and on records too he soon enjoyed a great reputation.

Here in the centre of the british empire Robeson "discovered" Africa. He got to know many Africans, students and sailors from the ports of London and Liverpool. His interest in the land of his for-fathers was aroused and he devoted his attention to the study of African languages and cultures. Filled with pride he found out that the African culture had most certainly held its own alongside the great cultural achievements of the European rich, what was, however, denied by the colonialists. He perceived the political significance that this knowledge of these cultural achievements would have for the Blacks in the USA and had articles to this

end published in "The Spectator" and "New Stateman and Nation". Everywhere he praised and defended African culture and discussed this subject with men like Nkrumah (Ghana), Azikiwe (Nigeria), Kenyatta (Kenya) and Nehru (India). In his book HERE I STAND he wrote, "The British Intelligence came one day to caution me about the political meaning of my activities. For the question loomed of itself: If African culture was what I insisted it was, what happens then to the claim that it would take 1,000 years for Africans to be capable of self-rule?"[1] In 1937, together with other like-minded persons Robeson founded the Council on African Affairs and of which he was the chairman until its disillution in 1955. The main concern of this body was to inform the public in a correct and objective manner about African conditions by means of publications, films, exhibitions, meetings and conferences and to organize action programs and campaigns for direct aid measures on behalf of the welfare and freedom of the African peoples. Dr. Alphaeus Hunton, a friend and collaborator of Robeson wrote, "His unswerving devotien to the cause of African freedom, his world-encompassing vision, and his powerful voice and big human spirit were of inestimable importance in forwarding the Council's efforts toward rallying Americans, black and white, in support of Africa's liberation from imperialist bondage."[2]

On January 29, 1950 the National Church of Nigeria honored Kwame Nkrumah, Nnamdi Azikiwe and Paul Robeson with the distinction "Hero of African Freedom". In a great festive ceremony in Aba, Nigeria, attended by 5,000 persons the men who had distinguished themselves in the struggle for African freedom were commensurately feted. However Paul Robeson had to be honored in absentia for the government of his country had forbidden him to travel by withdrawing his passport.

Invited by Sergei Eisenstein, the great creator of a socialist film art, Paul Robeson had visited the Soviet Union in 1934. This journey proved a memorable and longinfluencing event in his life. For he had seen with his own eyes how the Yakuts and Usbeks and other formerly oppressed peoples developed all of a sudden from a tribal community to a modern industrial society. And this took place, moreover in less than two decades. On leaving Robeson had said to Eisenstein: "Here I feel myself a human being for the first time, here I am not a nigger but a human being."

Becoming acquainted with the life of the Soviet people decisively influenced Robeson's political education and development. In England he began delving into Marxist philosophy and economics. He had been animated to this end by the outstanding scholar Hewlett Johnson, the Dean of Canterbury and the writer George Bernard Shaw who had once asked him his opinion of socialism upon which Robeson knew nothing to say. Much had remained unclear and inconceivable to him. Already during his first visit to the USSR he found out that the relations of the peoples to each other of the Soviet Union were based on equality of rights and equality of opportunities. A family of peoples with a great international consciousness had emerged from the czarish peoples' prison. Here too Robeson learned that the struggle for liberation could not be determined by emotions but should only ensue on the sound foundation of the science of Marxism-Leninism.

Subsequently he was often a guest in the first socialist country. Here he always sought and found for himself the mental prowess and confidence for his sometimes apparently hopeless looking struggle for freedom and human dignity.

Robeson described his participation in the liberation struggle of the Spanish people as a turning point in his life." In Spain I sang with my whole heart and soul for the gallant fighters of the International Brigades."[3] In the trenches before Madrid Robeson sensed for the first time the strength of international solidarity of the proletariat. He was embued with love and admiration when he met Black and white workers from his native land, member of the Lincoln Brigade who had come to help their class brothers in their defence of democracy.

In Germany and Spain Robeson had experienced fascism and had perceived the great danger which it posed to the peoples. He felt morally obliged now, at the outbreak of the Second World War to be at the side of his Black people, at the side of his class brothers in the USA. "Well, there were not just bosses in America, I reflected; there were workers, too. If I had found the hand of brotherhood here among these working people of Britain, I ought to be able to find that hand in America as well."[4] He found a way to the hearts of the workers: he debated with them at trade union meetings and stood with them on the picket lines. During months of travelling through the country he told the workers of the dangers of fascism and reported on his experiences in the Soviet Union. He always related this struggle against fascism with the close and unrelenting struggles of his Black people against racial discrimination. He never regarded this an exclusively American problem. He realised above all that this is part and parcel of the world-wide struggle for liberation of all exploited and oppressed peoples. He similarly realised that his actions could only be progressive, only then revolutionary if he managed in such a manner to promote the unity and consciousness of the masses. He sought and found comrades-in-arms amongst the white workers too. Colored workers owe him their thanks that they have been able to become fully equal members of the trade unions in the USA.

Following the Second World War the ruling circles of the United States answered the legitimate and louder and louder growing demands of the colored population for equality with a barbaric lynch justice. Robeson headed a delegation of the American Crusade to End Lynching which went to President Truman in the White House in 1946 demanding the promulgation of laws against lynch justice. Truman refused, and when he maintained that England and the United States were the last two remaining islands of freedom, Robeson answered that the British Empire was one of the greatest slave-holders in the history of mankind, a statement which the British press published and which served to promote the then Colonies Minister to make a statement.

Addressing the forum of the First Congress of Peace Forces in Paris in April 1949 Robeson declared: "It is unthinkable that American Negroes could go to war on behalf of those who have oppressed them for generations against the Soviet Union which in one generation has raised the people to full human dignity."[5]

Writing of Paul Robeson's position in Paris his friend and close colleague W. E. B. Du Bois notes in his autobiography: "For Paul Robeson America meant always opposing insults and mockery as a young Negro boy, to have to react silently to insults and to laughingly respond to discrimination, to have to sit alongside students who hated him and to work and play for the honor of a university which did not recognise him.

Why all that? Not because he attacked this country. Look around in England and France, in the Soviet Union and in the Scandinavian countries and enquire whether he ever uttered a word against America. What, therefore, was his crime? It was that whilst not damming America he praised the Soviet Union. He did so because this country treated him as a human being and not as a dog, because here, for the first time in their lives, he and his family were welcomed as human beings and he was honored as a great man. The Russian children adored him, the women kissed and the workers greeted him and the government cared for him. His eyes were full of tears and his heart filled with gratitude. He had never been so treated before. In America he was a 'nigger' and in England he was accepted; in France applauded but in the Soviet Union he was loved for being a great artist and he loved the Soviet Union. He believed that every Negro with blood in his veins would

join him in loving this people which had been the first to eliminate racial discrimination.

I witnessed him as he expressed this idea. It was in 1949 in Paris before the greatest peace meeting I had ever seen in the world. Thousands who had come from all parts of the world packed into the Pleyel Hall. Robeson, well-grown with broad shoulders quickly entered the room still exhaused from his concert trip through Europe. The spectators rose as a man and the walls trembled with applause. Robeson said his people desired peace and will never fight against the Soviet Union. Together with the thousands upon thousands I applauded enthusiastically.

This was his crime. He might hate whom he wanted and murder everywhere in the world. But his statement that he loved the Soviet Union and would never participate in a war against that country was the greatest crime imaginable to the American authorities. For that reason he was defamed and that is why they tried to murder him at Peekskill, that is why he was refused rooms for performances and his passport. The Rutgers University where he had studied spread lies about him and insulted him. Even some Afro-Americans participated in the hate tirade against him. But Paul Robeson remained true to himself and held fast. As was the case before all this, he loves and revers the Soviet Union and believes in America! But what, what could we say or do? We could only lower our head deeply ashamed."[6]

Robeson's son wrote: "The so-called 'Peekskill riots' were a direct result of a nationwide campaign by the government and the mass media against Paul Robeson, specifically because of his Paris statement. The 'riot' was in fact a police riot, because two thousand state and local police officers who were assigned to 'keep order' joined the rioters in attacking those who came peacefully to attend a Paul Robeson concert. After that concert halls and public meeting halls were closed to him, and any organization that sponsored a Paul Robeson appearence was threatened."[7]

On August 7, 1950 Robeson's passport was declared invalid. The only explanation given for this discriminating move was that his journeys abroad were directed against the best interests of the United States. In March 1952 this case was again considered this time by the Court of Appeal in Washington and Robeson's attorneys demanded for their client the right to travel both as an artist and equally as a leader of the world-wide movement for peace and colonial liberation. The prosecutors tried to justify the invalidation of the passport and wrote in a footnote to the court declaration: "... with an eye on the open admission of the applicant (for a passport - B. B.), that he has developed exceptional political activities on behalf of the colonially oppressed African peoples ... the diplomatic complications which might result from such political intervention of a person travelling abroad protected by an American passport can easily be imagined." The boycott of the American Government lasted for eight years. But even with a passport withdrawal and performance ban Robeson could not be silenced. He sent messages to the Congresses of the World Peace Council and to the participants of the World Youth Festival. He published a monthly journal "Freedom" with the slogan "Where one is enslaved, all are in chains" and used every issue of this periodical to hotly condemn racism and anti-communism, McCarthy's cold war and the hot war in Corea. He reported on the activities of the Council on African Affairs, gave suggestions for trade union work and time and time again called on the American workers to forge their unity and to engage in joint actions. Alongside all this activity he also found the time, in articles to praise the meritorious results of his colleagues and friends, W. E. B. Du Bois, William Patterson etc.

During these eight years Robeson was on several occasions hauled before the "House Unamerican Activities Committee" where he used the opportunity to express severest criticism of American Government home and foreign policy. During one such session, on July 12, 1956 his questioners found themselves obliged to abruptly, so enraged, end the hearing as Robeson called to them: "You are the non-patriots, you are the Unamericans and you should be ashamed of yourselves!"

A court decision personally signed by President Truman threatened Robeson with a fantastically high prison sentence and a prodigious fine should he attempt to cross the American-Canadian border; in addition the frontier authorities were ordered to arrest him using all necessary means of force. It was a clear threat which did not exclude the use of firearms. But the Canadian Union of Mine Mill and Smelter Workers, which had invited him to their congress organized in May 1952 a concert in the Peace Arch Park, on the border of the US federal state of Washington and the Canadian province of British Columbia. Forty thousand Canadians came along to demonstrate their friendship, alliance and solidarity with Robeson.

In November of the same year he sang and spoke notwithstanding the efforts of the local authorities to prevent his performance for a public meeting of a secondary modern school in Hartford Connecticut although two hundred and fifty policemen had turned out with the obvious intention of driving the people away.

The "National Paul Robeson Committee" had been formed in England comprising prominent policians, trade union leaders and artists and whose secretary was Professor Dr. Franz Loeser, the present-day Chairman of the Paul-Robeson-Committee of the GDR. With the support of the internationnal working class the committee organized a transatlantic concert by telephone. Thousands of spectators in London's St. Pancras Hall applauded vehemently as they heard their "Big Paul" speak and sing to them from New York.

A few weeks later in the Autumn of 1957 Paul Robeson again sang by telephone for the cultural festival of the Welsh miners with whom he was connected through a decades-long friendship.

In 1953 Paul Robeson was involved in the production of the film "Song of the Rivers" for which his voice was recorded on tape. He wrote in this connexion: "Friends in Europe worked on a film for the World Federation of Trade Unions and wanted me to sing a song for this production. This was the content of a letter I received in Summer 1954. The letter was short and only contained a few details. The words and music of the song had been enclosed but the poet and composer were not cited. The words were German although the song was to be sung in English. Verse and rhythm had to be sung precisely in the given number of seconds and I had to sing without accompaniment.

It was a peace and freedom song, a song about the fraternity of working people of all countries - naturally I would do it. But how?

I recalled how I had sung in London and Hollywood for films. I thought of the excellent, sound-proof studios with perfected acoustics, with director and assistant, tone engineers, conductor with earphones, complete orchestra, a small army of technicians, a manifold collection of expensive pieces of equipment - the only thing I had to do was to sing!

Obviously this here was going to be somewhat different. Here in New York I would have to become a sort of co-production manager of a film that was going to be shot somewhere in Europe. Well then!

The first step for Robeson the production manager was not difficult: he ordered the singer Robeson to learn the song. Time was getting short and the singer could practice the German text until the production manager found someone to write the English version.

The "studio" for the recording would be my brother's house in Harlem - the rectory which he had officiated in as clergyman for more than twenty years. And soon

it was possible to hear a new song in this studio that I practiced with my accompanier Alan Booth:
"Old Man Mississippi rages
Takes our cattle away from us, our land too"

It was a raging song of six powerful streams - the Mississippi, the Ganges, the Nile, the Yangtze, the Volga and the Amazonas - and the people who cultivated the land in their rich valleys; beauty and passion were in the German verses.

But English verses were required and one day when the Negro writer Lloyd Brown came to one of the rehearsals I told him of my work. Would he be prepared to help me and translate the words into English? He agreed and soon there was a new version to work on:
"Old Man Mississippi rages
Robs us of our cattle, plunders field and shore" - Excellent!

The singer had words and music to hand - but what about the tape recording, Mr. Production Manager. Time pressed, so you said.

Then a new problem arose. The big tape recording companies belonged to powerful capital groups and would refuse to rent out their studios for such a recording and the smaller ones would be afraid. Then one also had to remember that recently acts of sabotage by recording engineers had become known whose ears had been conditioned by McCarthy's raving and were deaf to a peace singer. My son provided the answer. He is an electrical engineer and in recent years had become a veritable expert for tape recordings. We would put him in the rectory.

The conditions were not exactly ideal as we set to work. The small children in the house could be silenced and the telephone cut but who could know if a taxi in the crowded street might not just then sound the horn and spoil the recording?

In such circumstances it would have been forgivable for the production manager to lose his head but he was too busy trying to be the singer and casting an eye at his son who stood over there, concentrating with all his might, glancing at the stop-watch in his hand and holding the other one over his head in order to be able to pull it down with a dramatic swing in that second in which the verse had to end.

Taxis sounded their horns, a young boy cried out, a plane thundered over the roof and with all the repetitions the six rivers became sixty. But finally the work was over. The six rivers rolled onto a small magnetized strip which was packed into a small box and sent across the ocean.

Months later we read with enthusiasm in the European press about a new documentary film "Song of the Rivers Rivers" shot by the great film producer Joris Ivens. The critics refered to a work of mastery, to a monumental work, a hymn to mankind, of a work that honored work and castigated oppression.

The critics said the partitur was beautiful and that it had been written for the film by Shostakovitch. The "unknown" poet was the famous German writer Bertolt Brecht. The commentary had been written by the renowned French writer Vladimir Pozner and Picasso created a drawing to make the film well known!

Masters of culture, pioneer fighters for peace - what a wonderful team I had worked with! My heart was embued with warm gratitude for this invitation which, despite all obstacles made it possible for a Negro, an American to cooperate with a Dutchman, a Russian, a German and a Frenchman to create a work of art for the struggle for peace and freedom.

Until now I have not yet seen the film which carries a song from a house in Harlem all over the world. Millions in many countries have seen "Song of the Rivers" and have heard the commentary in Arabic, Japanese, Czech, Polish, English, Russian, Spanish, German, Chinese, French and many other languages; but we here in American are denied such an opportunity.

But we know that films of peace will soon be welcomed in our country and that singers of peace will soon have passports in order to travel. No obstacle can halt the most powerful of all rivers - the peace and freedom will of the peoples which is irresistable."[8]

In April 1958 more than thirty countries staged celebrations on the occasion of Robeson's sixtieth birthday and without exception urged that he be returned his passport. The then Indian Prime Minister Nehru who was the sponsor of the festive act in New Delhi said: "This is an occasion which deserves celebration not only because Paul Robeson is one of the greatest artists of our generation, but also because he has represented and suffered for a cause which should be dear to all of us - the cause of human dignity."[9]

Shortly afterwards Robeson had his passport returned and travelled abroad. In several European countries, in the Soviet Union, Australia and New Zealand he thanked millions of people in his way for their solidarity of previous years. Significant is the fact that for over three decades he played the lead role in Shakespeare's drama "Othello" and always with great success. In 1930 in London, than in 1943/44 in the United States with 296 productions on Broadway alone; never before and never since that time has a Shakespearian piece had such a success in the United States; in 1959/60 the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre in Stratford-on-Avon, England again asked him to play this role.

Innumerable concerts on the stage, on radio and television extending between England and New Zealand exhausted his strength. In 1963 Paul Robeson became seriously ill and was medically treated for a longer period in the GDR. Towards the end of 1963 he returned home after five years absence.

Paul Robeson who had used this long concert tour to renew his cordial friendship and alliance with the international working class, this Paul Robeson - this the ruling circles of the United States had had to learn in the meantime - could never be brought to fall and silenced. So they spread lies and falsehoods about his political attitude and left no stone unturned in a futile bid to spread a veil of forgetfulness over his life and activities. But a human being cannot be forgotten of whom a friend wrote after the Peekskill outrages: "He (Robeson) wanted to sing; we all wanted him to sing, "they" did not want him to sing, "they" tried everything to kill him. But he sang and we listened to him - and became stronger!"

Footnotes

1. Robeson, Paul: HERE I STAND, London 1958, p. 43
2. ibid., p. 127
3. ibid., p. 61
4. ibid., p. 62
5. Freedomways, Vol. 11, No. 1/1971, p. 27
6. Du Bois, W. E. B. MEIN WEG - MEINE WELT, Berlin 1965, p. 500
7. Freedomways, Vol. 11, No. 1/1971 p. 27
8. Ivens, Joris - Pozner, Vladimir: SONG OF THE RIVERS, Berlin 1957, p. 31
9. Nehru, Jawaharlal: TRIBUTES, Freedomways, Vol. 11, No. 1/1971, p. 20

II. ART IS WEAPON

The Negro Renaissance and Paul Robeson's Development as an Actor and Singer

By HORST IHDE

Although in an interview with the Daily Worker in 1960 Robeson said that his twelve years in England had shaped his mind in a decisive manner[1], he emphasized on another occasion that: "... my career as an artist in America and abroad, my participation in public life, the views which I hold today - all have their roots in the early years ..."[2].

The artist, who was born in Princeton, New Jersey, on April 9, 1898, spent his childhood and adolescent years during a period of important economic, social and cultural change among the colored population of the United States when the great migration of the Negroes from the South to the North initiated a whole chain of effects. For centuries the great mass of Negroes had lived in the Southern States, while only a small, mainly urban minority could be found in the north, and up until the First World War this state of affairs did not change to any significant extent. Apart from individual cases, the migration of the Afro-Americans took place only within narrow limits and unchanged living conditions. Only when many Negroes moved from the southern plantations to the northern industrial centres, did this picture change.

The economic situation of the colored laborers or share-croppers in the South was completely insecure as the dependence on the cotton crop involved incessant fluctuations. Soil exhaustion meant that hopes of good harvests were illusionary and, since most of the farms were deep in debt, even minor tailures were apt to have widespread effects of an calamitous significance. The appearence of the boll weevil, introduced from Mexico at about the turn of the century, for example, was a catastrophe for the cotton planters.

The southern towns had little to offer the black work workers in an economic sense and the only road open to them, therefore, was the trek to the northern industrial centres. The booming war industry attracted the plantation workers and agents of the northern industrial enterprises lured cheap labor to the north with empty promises. In 1916 the Pittsburgh heavy industries hired some 15,000 workers from the south and thereby started the avalanche.[3] Just as Robeson's father had, as a lad of 15 years, run away from his slave-owner in North Carolina prior to the outbreak of the Civil War in order to settle in the free Northern States, so tens of thousands of poverty-stricken colored farm laborers sought relative freedom in the northern towns during the first quarter of our century. The large groups of Negroes who set themselves up in the centres drew others behind them. Robeson's father, who had become a parson in Princetown, was joined by many of his relatives and friends from North Carolina during the years of the great northern trek and young Paul soon found himself surrounded by a great number of his close relations who adopted him into their collective after the early death of his mother.

To a Negro the North meant not only the fulfilment of his economic desires but also escape from the discrimination and violence which were then once again in the ascent. During the First World War the number of Afro-Americans lynched in the USA was 199 while between 1919 and 1922 as many as 239 colored citizens were massacred by the whiteskinned murder gangs.[4] Soldiers with a dark skin were treated just as savagely and infamously in the army as in civil life. On their return from the war some of them were lynched in their southern home towns before they were even able to take off the uniforms in which they had fought for democracy and liberty.

The north-bound trek of the Negroes swelled the proletariat in the industrial regions. While in 1900 only about 2 million Afro-Americans were city-dwellers, the number had doubled by 1925[5] and the Negro population was maturing into an economic and political factor of considerable significance and beginning to realize its strength. Under the spiritual leadership of William Edward Burghardt Du Bois (1868-1963), that great man who later became Robeson's friend and comrade-in-arms, the Niagara Movement was founded in 1905. In 1909 this became the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), an organization founded by Negroes and whites with the purpose of improving the lot of the Afro-Americans in the United States by legal means. Du Bois was elected Director of Publicity Work for this new association and was charged with the task of editing the periodical "The Crisis" which was founded in 1910. This scholar and writer developed the journal into a mass-circulation paper which had, by 1918, reached a monthly circulation of 100,000 copies[6] and formed, in those years, the main platform of the struggle for civil liberties.

Up to that time no Negro leader had found a basis from which the colored people could be organized. Marcus Garvey (1887-1940) was the first organizer who addressed the masses of the urban proletariat and filled them with enthusiasm for his aims. This Negro, who was born in Jamaica, founded the Universal Negro Improvement Association which, after 1917, quickly gained popularity and spread throughout the entire USA. Garvey identified the problems of the American Negroes with colonialism in Africa and coined the slogan for the movement: "Return to Africa!"

Garvey was strongly influenced by Booker T. Washington's autobiography "Up from Slavery" (1901) and by the author's pettybourgeois ideology. Pride in race and the concept of African nationalism were inseparably linked in Garvey's philosophical approach, and his unrelenting efforts to popularize the proud heritage of the Negroes and their African homeland led to the aspirations of the so-called New Negroes which found artistic expression in the Negro Renaissance of the 'twenties'.

The concentration of Negroes in the towns brought about an ever expanding intellectual and artistic cultural movement and there emerged a stratum of colored intellectuals and artists, many of whom had come directly from the ranks of the proletariat and had, despite the impact of the ruling white culture, remained in close touch with the masses of the Negro population. The progressive representatives of this group rediscovered the treasures of their cultural heritage and made use of the folklore of their ancestors to consolidate and strengthen their own racial consciousness.

In the evolution of culture among the Afro-Americans the Black ghetto in New York played an outstanding role. As this most densely populated city in the USA had already become the recognized centre of art and literature, it seemed quite natural that the black musicians, painters and writers from the South should settle there. Harlem became the undisputed metropole of colored America and the versatile

James Weldon Johnson (1871-1938), whose well-known Negro Hymn later formed part of Robeson's repertoire, was one of the trail-blazers of the Harlem Renaissance. In 1917 Johnson published his first collection of poems and in 1922 the "Book of American Negro Poetry" which also contained contemporary poems. The two volumes of Negro Spirituals (1925/1926) published in co-operation with his brother J. Rosamond Johnson also helped to arouse wide interest in the then still underrated treasures of Negro culture.

A circle established in Harlem included such writers as Claude McKay, Jean Toomer, Arna Bontemps, Countee Cullen and Walter White, all of whose works were protests against the oppression and discrimination of the Afro-Americans. These writers sought they strengthen the pride of their people and they consciously based their work on the folk-art of the Negroes. The most outstanding member of this group was Langston Hughes (1902-1967) who expressed their aims in 1926, writing: "Let Paul Robeson singing Water Boy, and Rudolph Fisher writing about the streets of Harlem, and Jean Toomer holding the heart of Georgia in his hands, and Aaron Douglass drawing strange black fantasies cause the smug Negro middle class to turn from their white, respectable, ordinary books and papers to catch a glimmer of their own beauty. We younger Negro artists who create now intend to express our individual dark-skinned selves without fear or shame. If white people are pleased we are glad. If they are not, it doesn't matter. We know we are beautiful. And ugly too. We bould our temples for tomorrow, strong as we know how, and we stand on top of the mountain, free within ourselves ..."[7]

Hughes gave poetic expression to the feeling of racial pride and of awareness of the Negro's own strength in his poem, "I Too Sing America", which he wrote in 1925. In it he used these visionary words:

"Tomorrow,
I'll sit at the table
When company comes.
Nobody 'll dare
Say to me,
'Eat in the kitchen',
Then,
Besides,
They 'll see how beautiful I am
And be ashamed, -
I, too, am America."[8]

The Negro Renaissance, however, would have been of little significance had it not aroused the interest and to a certain extent the well-meaning support of white artists and intellectuals. Interest in the Negroes had begun to develop rapidly since the First World War as the process of economic crises and forebodings about the end of the bourgeois social system made many people look for new values. Many artists realized, to their consternation, the dubious nature and the brittleness of American post-war society and more than ever before they felt crushed by technology and alienated from their environment. Even Hemingway (1899-1961), in his novel, "The Sun also Rises" (Fiesta, 1926), allowed his heroes to find the rest and relaxation, which they had looked for in vain in turbulent Paris, while touring the Spanish mountains. Some artists compared the hectic atmosphere of the imperialist era in which the individual seemed almost totally isolated with the Negroes whom the white cultural workers identified with that purity and desirable primitiveness which had for so long been lost to the whites because of the steady spread of industrialization and the commercialization of every aspect of life. The Negroes lived in a different manner from the whites and seemed to be in possession of experiences unknown to the ordinary American man and so the black man's life, his art and the primitive society from which he had sprung were investigated and praised. Through this tribute to the primitive, the artists also wanted to express their opposition to the business-ridden world and the technicized life of bourgeois society. Many people viewed jazz as a successful attempt to express healthy primitiveness and after the turn of the century it embarked on a triumphal tour across North America and by the 'twenties its best interpreters had introduced it into Europe as well. The appreciation of jazz, however, was only one aspect of the general attention being paid to Afro-American culture in this period as the Negro became an important and interesting subject for literature too.

As early as 1914, Vachel Lindsay (1879-1931) had written a poem, "The Congo", subtitled "A Study of the Negro Race", in which he made the independent minds of the Negroes and their homeland his theme. In 1922 Clement Wood, an otherwise unknown author, published his novel "Nigger" which describes the vicissitudes of a Negro family from the end of the Civil War until the First World War. Artistically the book is not of a very high standard but it has literary significance because its protagonists are, without exception, Afro-Americans. Wood tried to depict the harsh and poverty-ridden life of a Negro family from the South who had migrated to a northern industrial centre with its multifarious problems. The characters in the book are all members of the exploited class towards whom the author displays great sympathy. In his work Wood paved the way not only for white but also for other dark-skinned authors to deal with similar subjects and problems.
Sherwood Anderson (1876-1941) for example, in his novel "Dark Laughter" (1925), glorified the "instinct-motivated black people" who, however, play no major role in the work itself. The novel "Porgy" by Du Bose Heyward (1885-1940) describes the life of the povertystricken Negro population in Charleston but in a romanticised and glorified light. Such a sentimental novel would have been quickly forgotten had the stage version of the book not been awarded the 1927 Pulitzer Prize and Gershwin's opera "Porgy and Bess" (1935) which was based on the novel, brought further fame to the writer.

Closely linked with the Negro Renaissance is the name of a white writer who did more for the young Negro artists, including Robeson, than all the other people who were interested in or supported them.
Carl Van Vechten (1880-1964) had already made a name for himself as a music and theatre critic when he took up writing in the early 'twenties. Although most of his work is by no means memorable, his novel "Nigger Heaven", published in 1926, retains its value as an historic document. While practically all the white critics enthusiastically welcomed its publication, many Negroes were strongly critical of it, feeling particularly insulted by the title. Van Vechten's forte is his lively description of the life of colored people in Harlem. He does not attempt to depict the arduous and monotonous existence of the simple people but concentrates rather on the places where the black bourgeoisie and middle classes go for entertainment. "Nigger Heaven" was the most successful novel on Negroes by a white author and aroused, although primarily through its over-emphasis on the exotic and sensual, the interest of the white bourgeoisie in Harlem's nightlife. In addition, the book stimulated various colored writers to engage in similar ventures.

Incomparably more important for the introduction of the modern Negro as a literary figure were, however, Eugene O'Neill's (1888-1953) early works. In many of his plays this dramatist tried to present, in dramatic form, the feelings that are dormant in the subconscious mind and frequently limited himself to depicting the inner thoughts of his heroes. Although his rejection of the real external world with its social confrontations and conflicts partly marred his earlier works, he did pioneering work for American literature by introducing serious Negro characters. In his one-act play "Thirst", written in 1914, for example, a mulatto was among the

characters and in "The Moon of the Caribbeans" (1918) he describes the primitive life of seamen and the indigenous people on a West Indian island. In "Emperor Jones", in which Robeson played the part of Brutus Jones, the audience witnesses the downfall of an American Negro, a former sleeping-car conductor and prisoner who appoints himself ruler of a tiny West Indian island and is eventually shot in the jungle by his subjects while trying to escape. By introducing African drums as background music and by taking the hero back to the African time of his ancestors, O'Neill tried to conjure up the exotic and romantic atmosphere of the Negroes' African heritage.

One of O'Neill's best plays of this period is "All God's Chillun Got Wings" (1924) in which he treats the problem of a mixed marriage between a Negro and a white woman. Although, in the author's eyes, such a relationship cannot come to a happy end and must inevitably be destroyed by the racial difference, O'Neill's attempt must be classified as a courageous act. A white woman in the play kisses a Negro's hand and as a result reactionary forces in New York, led by the Lord Mayor, tried to prevent the staging of the play, while the author himself was threatened by the Ku Klux Klan.

The growing interest in Afro-Americans during this period, made it possible for at least a few outstanding Negro actors to play serious roles. Since to end of the Civil War colored actors had been playing roles in so-called minstrel shows and in variety theatres as comedians and cheap jesters but after the turn of the century and particularly in the course of the Negro Renaissance Negro comedians had already conquered the Broadway theatres and had aroused a considerable stir with their musicals and revues not only at home but also while on tour in foreign countries.

One of the well-known colored actors of these years was Charles Gilpin who in 1919 performed with great success in the play "Abraham Lincoln" by the English playwright John Drinkwater (1882-1937). One year later he took the title role in O'Neill's "Emperor Jones" and with his performance set new standards for the presentation of serious roles by Negro actors. Although Robeson was able to learn a great deal from his widely-popular idol, he was, nevertheless, also faced with the task of at least equalling such a great accomplishment.

Paul Robeson went to New York in February 1920 to finish his law studies and immediately settled in Harlem. The famous sportsman who had graduated from Rutgers University with great distinction soon became well known in the New York Negro ghetto, and Eslanda Robeson wrote in her husband's biography:

> "His unaffected friendliness, his natural tact, his great gift for 'mixing', his real interest in everyone, soon made him 'one of the boys'. No matter how great his achievements then or later, his easy good-natured simplicity kept him from being regarded with awe; his many friends always felt that he was one of themselves who was doing great things, rather than that he was some far removed celebrity."[9]

While in Harlem Robeson made his début in an insignificant play and then in 1922 he had a part in "Taboo", a weak but typical play of this period by Mary Hoyt Wiborg which featured the pagan traditions of the Negroes within a framework of jazz and African dancing and singing. The play was a failure and after this digression Robeson immediately returned to his studies without giving any serious thought to an artistic career. In 1923 he finished his legal studies but found that it was difficult even for a highly-qualified Negro to obtain employment commensurate with his qualifications and inclinations. Eventually he was offered an interesting position in an influential white lawyers' office but despite promising prospects he soon left the profession because he could not bear the discrimination and humiliation inflicted by his white colleagues. He had no doubts therefore about accepting an offer to act in two of O'Neill's plays at the Provincetown Theatre.

Between 1915 and 1929 the Provincetown Players were a progressive bourgeois group which comprised outstanding artists and writers such as John Reed (1887-1920), Theodore Dreiser (1871-1945) and Eugene O'Neill. The small theatre company, which had found a home in Greenwich Village, the artists' quarter of New York, was basically different from the Broadway theatres which operated on a purely commercial basis for the Provincetown Players wrote and produced their plays for the mere pleasure of acting and experimenting without trying to evade critical social problems. Robeson was immediately enthused by the creative spirit of these theatre devotees and held long discussions with O'Neill and his friends on the aims and significance of dramatic art. Paul took the leading part in "Emperor Jones" and "All God's Chillun Got Wings", and the enthusiastic critics paid high tribute to his great acting ability. The author, who was deeply impressed by Robeson's interpretations, presented him his collected plays with this dedication:

> "In gratitude to Paul Robeson, in whose interpretation of Brutus Jones I have found the most complete satisfaction an author can get - that of seeing his creation born into flesh and blood; and in whose creation of Jim Harris in my 'All God's Chillun Got Wings' I found not only complete fidelity to my intent under trying circumstances, but, beyond that, true understanding and racial integrity. Again with gratitude and friendship. - Eugene O'Neill, 1925".[10]

In all these years Robeson was completely under the ideological influence of the Harlem Renaissance, and the critic Alexander Woollcott commented on May 8, 1924, in a review of "Emperor Jones" that:

> "Robeson brings to the play a more primitive strength, a broader stroke of tone and gesture, a greater tumult of the immemorial fears which this Voodoo play invokes from the deeps."[11]

While the athlete-actor played the part of "Emperor Jones" with all his physical beauty and exotic primitiveness, displaying inimitable dramatic intensity, his leading role in "All God's Chillun Got Wings" gave him an opportunity to present a colored man as the partner of white men at the same or a higher level of emotion and experience. A contemporary critic might regard Jim Harris, the hero of this drama, as a weakling or a man of unrealistic humility. In this role acted Robeson without reservations in the spirit of the limited aims of the Negro movement of that time, aims which were expressed in these words:

> "If I can make them (the white audience, H. I.) realize fully the pitiful struggle of Jim Harris and reduce them to tears for him at the end - weeping because a Negro has suffered - I will have done something to make them realize, even if only subconsciously and for a few moments, that Negroes are the same kind of people they themselves are, suffer as they suffer, weep as they weep; That all this arbitrary separation because of color is unimportant - that we are all human beings."[12]

Robeson's career as a singer is inseparably linked with his acting both in time and in terms of his personal development. In order to give even wider scope to his wonderfully warm und full voice, the director introduced a spiritual into the play "Emperor Jones" which Robeson sang in the jungle while fleeing from his pursuers. With this the foundation was laid for Robeson's career as a singer and on Sunday, April 19, 1925, he gave his first concert at the theatre of the Provincetown Players. Apart from two items, the program consisted of Negro folksongs.

The work songs and secular songs came from the people themselves and their writers and composers remained anonymous. The tunes had strengthened the slaves' determination to survive and had given them a

certain measure of joy and self-respect but over and beyond this they had also raised the collective spirit of the opressed class. The slave spirituals which Robeson sang were also genuine folksongs whose words and music were created, altered and supplemented by the collective. The opressed Negroes had used revivalist hymns and other elements of "white" music as raw material for their grave and partly openly rebellious songs but the black singers and composers transformed the sober evangelical hymns into exciting and rousing rhythms and filled the parables of the Bible with new life. Some of the spirituals with their seemingly pious words from the Holy Scriptures are ambiguous; thus in the spiritual "Steal Away", sung by Robeson, the reference to the liberation from bondage of the enslaved Afro-Americans is easily descernible. In many other spirituals too, the black man expressed his personal emotions and hopes in a more or less open way. "Go down Moses", a spiritual which Robeson sang at his first concert, had helped the slaves in their preparations to excape to the free North. As former slaves recalled, that heroic freedom fighter Harriet Tubman, was identical with the figure of Moses in the spiritual while the illegal arrival of this woman who had liberated hundreds of Negroes from slavery, was signalled before the Civil War by the singing of this melody.

Robeson, of course, was not the discoverer of this rich cultural heritage. Beginning in 1871 a Negro choir from Fisk University in Tennessee had won audiences in the USA and subsequently in Europe by singing Negro spirituals. Following this example, other Negro colleagues established choirs and systematically cultivated and performed these songs. Robeson, however, was the first soloist to devote a whole program to these songs. In his capacity as a vocalist, too, the paramount aim of the artist was to arouse the understanding and sympathy of white audiences for the Negroes' plight.[13] Although the young artist at this stage of his development had already been convinced of the educational function of his art, he still lacked the challenging, rebellious and militant approach which distinguished his later artistry. During this period Robeson still conformed on all major issues to the demands and aims of the petty-bourgeois nationalist Harlem Renaissance which viewed the Negro question as just a racial problem and whose members were able to recognize problems but whose limited bourgeois ideology prevented them from offering any practical solutions.

In the summer of 1925 Robeson and his young wife travelled together to London where he was to play the leading role in "Emperor Jones", the play in which he had made a name for himself in the United States. The English welcomed the colored actor, whose fame had long since spread to their country, with great hospitality and cordiality. From 1927 to 1937 Robeson made London his permanent home and toured all Europe giving concerts. The American Negro felt at home in England and loved the cosmopolitan atmosphere of London, particularly because here, in contrast to the land of his birth, he was not compelled to live in a ghetto nor did any racial discrimination exist in the circles in which as a world-famous star he was able to mix. This happy time in England was significant for Robeson in a totally different sense, however.

During the first phase of his artistic work, Robeson never really broke through the narrow barriers of black nationalism, and looking back he stated in an article written in 1951:

> "All through my youth - in my mind and in fact - I was a part of a large family, a family to which I was responsible. And this family stretched out from Harlem to Washington ... all across the nation - wherever the Negro people lived and struggled. My songs were the songs of my people - for five years I would sing no others."[14]

But Robeson's field of vision widened. He sought and found contact with the common people and admitted in an interview with a London paper in 1960: "I came here unshaped. Great parts of my working class roots are here."[15]

During the great economic crisis of the thirties, Robeson took the side of the striking workers whom he now recognised as allies of the oppressed Negroes in his home. He took his art to the exploited class and placed his genius completely at the service of the working class. Recalling that period he wrote:

> "I gave up two years of my time then - way back in 1936-37 - to help build workers' theatres in Great Britain, to help develop a working class culture in the full meaning of that term."[16]

His co-operation with the English workers helped Robeson extricate himself from his nationalist tendencies. In London, which at that time was the centre of the imperialist world, he came into contact with people of all races and from all continents. He held discussions not only with students and intellectuals from Africa but in the London Docks he also met African seamen whose ideology differed in no way from that of their English counterparts.

From this newly-won outlook, his African heritage presented itself in a completely different light and, although Robeson had from the very beginning of his artistic career been concerned with the folklore of the Afro-Americans, it was only then, some ten years later, that the interrelation between African culture and American Negro art became completely clear in his mind. In his autobiography he refers to this development in these terms:

> "I came to see the roots of my own people's culture, especially in our music which is still the richest and most healthy in America."[17]

Through his dedication to Negro folkart which, as an integral part of the culture of an oppressed race, was necessarily revolutionary in spirit, there opened up for Robeson an almost inexhaustible source of artistic inspiration. He became increasingly conscious that the spiritual and revolutionary potential of this folklore had to be placed at the service of the class struggle waged by the proletariat. Robeson was a politically mature singer when, while still living in England, he discovered the beauty of the folk-songs of the British Isles and he confesses in his autobiography:

> "And as I sang these lovely melodies I felt that they, too, were close to my heart and expressed the same soulful quality that I knew in Negro music."[18]

In the thirties Robeson became increasingly aware of the international links and common cause beetween exploited people throughout the world and this enable him to express even more successfully than previously the emotions and hopes of the common man. From this time onwards, he devoted himself seriously to studying the folk-songs of various peoples and he resumed the language studies he had begun earlier now in order to be able to sing the songs in the language of the country of their origin. During the subsequent years Robeson constantly enlarged his repertoire by including folk-songs and 'lieder' from various nations. In his interpretations progressive songs such as the "Thaelmann Column", the "Song of the Peatbog Soldiers" or the song of the immortal Joe Hill, which was his special favourite, obtained new significance. The artist identified himself completely with the revolutionary content of such militant songs and through them expressed his personal attitude.

Robeson's interest in the culture of the African countries chained by imperialism led him to compare them with the situation in the Soviet Union where previously oppressed and underdeveloped nations had, within less than two decades, developed from tribal society to modern socialist society. In 1934 the artist visited the Soviet Union for the first time and gathered impressions which were decisive for his further development. Before the infamous Committee for Un-American Activities, which crossexamined him in 1956, he declared:

> "In Russia I felt for the first time like a full

human being - no color prejudice like in Mississippi, no color prejudice like in Washington."[19]

The process of Robeson's artistic development and maturing political understanding were also determined by his growing grasp of the inhuman role of fascism. In 1933 the actor played in London in a special performance of "All God's Chillun Got Wings", the takings of which he donated to the first Jewish refugees who had escaped the fascist terror in Germany. In 1934 Robeson and his friends were assaulted by Hitler's brown shirts in Berlin, an event which made a deep impression on his mind. He recognized then, as he later said in a radio broadcast: "that the struggle for Negro rights was an inseparable part of the anti-fascist struggle."[20]

Robeson was, however, never content just to voice his theoretical opinions; he invariably placed his entire art and personality at the service of the principles he recognized as just. It was this which lay behind his decision in 1938 to go to Spain and to use his songs in the support of the democratic forces fighting reaction and fascism. His experiences in the anti-fascist struggle decided Robeson to return to the United States in 1939 in order to promote, together with the American workers, the cause of the working people in the land of his birth.

Robeson's increased responsibility as an actor had already manifested itself in his interpretation of Othello, which had secured for him a triumphal success in the London of 1930. Although Shakespeare's great tragedy had long fascinated him, he had delayed for a considerable time until he felt sufficiently mature to tackle such a demanding role. Robeson spared neither time nor effort preparing himself for the part. He studied the English language of Shakespeare's time, read phonetic works and sought advice in detailed discussions with the most expert scholars in the field. Just before the first night he said to a reporter from the "New York Times":

"I have read virtually everything of Shakespeare ... Now that I know the English people and really understand what their country means to them, now that I am in touch with the English spirit, I feel I can play Othello."[21]

For the 1943 Broadway production of "Othello" the actor once again studied the drama in detail and worked out for himself the meaning of every word, every gesture. He completely indentified himself with Shakespeare's tragic hero and presented a man who does not murder his wife because of blind jealousy but who is driven to killing her when his noblest feelings and human dignity have been trampled underfoot. With this performance Robeson reached the climax of his fame as an actor. In New York the drama reached 296 performances, breaking any previous record for a Shakespeare play.[22] By his acting on stage in films the artist reached sections of the population he could never have touched as a singer and for this reason he remained faithful to the stage and the spoken word.

Despite his great success as an actor, Robeson showed particular interest in and affection for singing. His matured political understanding of the social implications of his art gave his singing a new quality. According to his lifelong friend and accompanist Lawrence Brown, Robeson reached the climax of his singing career in the postwar years from 1945 to 1947.[23] During that time, but particularly during the involuntary break in the fifties, the artist made an intensive study of the theoretical issues of the origin of folk-songs[24] and developed the thesis that nearly all music in the world stems from old and original folk music.[25] This conclusion, however daring it may seem, was bound to have been reached by the singer who had studied the folk-songs of so many nations, for all of them constitute some part of the culture of the oppressed classes in those countries.

The workers and peasants whose toil and sweat laid the foundations of all culture in all countries, also established the preconditions for intellectual and cultural life. The creative talents of the popular masses have found expression in folklore and especially in song. To varying degrees the exploited classes were excluded from the culture of the ruling classes and therefore developed their own folklore in which they were able to become active as human beings and personalities. Since this folklore has its roots in similar or even identical conditions and experiences in every country, the great similarity in the motifs of the folk-songs of the various nations comes as no surprise.

In his modesty Robeson once said about himself: "I am only a folk-singer."[26] This statement, with its manifold implications, indeed applies to this great artist. From an actor and singer, blessed by nature, whose career began under the impact of the bourgeois-nationalist Negro Renaissance, Paul Robeson developed into a genuine folk artist who became the voice of his people and the conscience of oppressed peoples all over the world. From an advocate of racial equality and the beauty of black people he matured, in the course of the class struggles of the thirties, into a revolutionary whose art and personal example were instrumental in paving the way for the revolutionary revival of the Negroes in the USA during the present militant epoch.

Notes:

1 "Daily Worker", Jan. 1, London, 1960

2 Robeson, P.: "Mein Lied - meine Waffe" ("Here I Stand"), translated by G. F. Alexan, Berlin, 1958, p. 67

3 Bartens, D.: "Die Nordwanderung der Neger in USA. Gründe und Auswirkungen", Dissertation, Berlin, 1936, p. 16

4 Foster, W. Z.: "The Negro People in American History", New York, 1954, p. 440

5 Woofter, T. J. Jr.: "Negro Problems in Cities", Garden City, New York, 1928, p. 17

6 Franklin, J. H.: "From Slavery to Freedom, A History of Negro Americans", 3d ed., Vintage Books, New York, 1969, p. 447

7 Hughes, L.: "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain", in "The Nation" XXII (June 23, 1926), in "Negro Protest Thought in the Twentieth Century", ed. by Francis L. Broderick and August Meier, Indianopolis, New York, Kansas City, p. 96 et seq.

8 "Auch ich bin Amerika", Dichtungen amerikanischer Neger, translated by Stephan Hermlin, Berlin, 1948, p. 49

9 Robeson, E. G.: "Paul Robeson, Negro", London, 1930, p. 68

10 ibid. p. 79

11 "Sun", May 8, 1924

12 Robeson, E. G.: op. cit., p. 85

13 ibid.

14 "Freedom", New York, vol. 1, Nr. 4 (April 1951)

15 "Daily Worker", op. cit.

16 "Freedom", op. cit.

17 Paul Robeson, op. cit., p. 76

18 ibid. p. 95

19 ibid. p. 93

20 ibid. p. 98

21 Quoted by Marie Seton: "Paul Robeson", London, 1958, p. 53

22 ibid. p. 154

23 ibid. p. 168

24 See, for example, his article "Pesni Moego Naroda", in "Sovietskaya Muzyka" 7/1949, pp. 100-105

25 Robeson, P.: "Gedanken über Musik", in "Musik und Gesellschaft", vol. 8, Nr. 4, 1958, p. 209

26 Quoted by Martha Dodd: "Paul Robeson", in "Mainstream", vol. 16, No. 5 (May 1963), p. 56

American Press Notices published 1924–1926

"New York Times", April 20, 1925
"An unusually interesting program of Negro music was given by the baritone Paul Robeson and his associate Lawrence Brown, before a large and enthusiastic audience. Mr. Robeson is a singer of genuine power. His Negro spirituals have the ring of the revivalist, they hold in them a world of religious experience; it is a cry from the depths, this universal humanism that touches the heart. Sung by one man, they voiced the sorrows and hopes of a people."

"New York World", April 20, 1925
"So all those who listened last night to the first concert in this country made entirely of Negro music - if one may count out the chorals from Fisk and so forth - may have been present at a turning point - one of those thin points of time in which a star is born and not yet visible - the first appearance of this folk wealth to be made without deference or apology. Paul Robeson's voice is difficult to describe. It is a voice in which deep bells ring. It has all it needs, - perfect pace, beautiful enunciation. Mr. Brown is a craftsman. He set many of the songs. Together they gave the kind of delight that kept the audience in its seats long after the applause brought nothing but silence."

"New York Evening Post", Mai 4, 1925
"Last night Paul Robeson and Lawrence Brown gave their second concert of the season, and revealed once more their mastery of the songs of their people. They provided this reporter with a thrill as exquisite as the revelation of Chaliapin singing Moussorgsky. For Mr. Robeson combines with a gloriously rich and mellow voice a dramatic restraint and power that seem to hold unheard thunder behind each song. His spirituals sung with classic simplicity, have a particular flavor of encompassing some universal tragedy of spirit within the bounds of the naive form of folk song. And while Mr. Robeson offered the dramatic foundations of the recital, Mr. Brown's sympathetic singing and the piano arrangements completed a concert that brought cheers from the Sunday night gathering."

"Chicago Herald Examiner", February 11, 1926
"I have just heard the finest of all Negro voices and one of the most beautiful in the world, and those fortunate ones who were present last night in Orchestra Hall when Paul Robeson made his first Chicago appearance, will testify that I do not exaggerate. In soft mellow resonance, in sympathetic appeal, in its organ like ease and power, it is distinguished among the great voices of the present. By quality alone it exercises a spell that is inescapable. Long before he had finished his first group of spirituals, Robeson had moved his listeners to tears, to laughter, and to shouted demands for repetitions. His program was limited to the music of his race. Such a program might easily become monotonous, but this singer practices a simplicity, a sincerity, and an unconscious dignity of style that immediately wins the respectful attention of his listeners. After the first phrase from his magnificient voice they are won completely. Criticism is silent before such beauty. His associate, Lawrence Brown, is a gifted accompanist, a resourceful arranger of the music of his people, and at times a capable vocal collaborator."

"Providence News", March 1, 1926
"Mr. Robeson is a versatile genius. We do not know where to look for an artist who is freer from affectation, who gives to all he does a more splendid dignity, who seeks and obtains his effects in a more legitimate way. Mr. Robeson sang always with a warm rich tone. Here are two men doing work which, we believe, will be of tremenduous significance to the future development of American music, torch bearers who are proving to us that there is a wealth of artistic possibilities in their race."

"New Republic", March 3, 1926
"Paul Robeson is not merely an actor and singer of Negro spirituals, but a symbol. A sort of sublimation of what the Negro may be in the Golden Age hangs about him, and imparts to his appearances an atmosphere of affection and delight that is seldom felt in an American audience. Let us give thanks that we were not born too late to hear this Negro Chaliapin render the spirituals reverently, with wildness and awe, like a trusting child of God."

"Sun", Mai 8, 1924
"The Provincetown Theater has brought suddenly and unexpectedly around a fresh opportunity for one and all to see that extraordinary play by Eugene O'Neill. Those to whom that play is already familiar will find it revived now with a greater guile and a fresher invention in production and they will see a performance in the role that was Charles Gilpin's when the play was new ...
It was a canny and successful demonstration and one who admired exceedingly the performance that Gilpin gave as "Brutus Jones" now rises in meeting to say that it was not so fine a performance as that which the stalwart and magnificently equipped Robeson gave last night at the Provincetown. For Robeson adds to his extraordinary physique a shrewd, rich understanding of the role and a voice that is unmatched in the American theater. This dusky giant unleashed in a great play provides the kind of evening in the theater that you remember all your life ..."

The Black Liberation Movement and American Drama
By EBERHARD BRUENING

The history of American drama and theatre shows that the Afro-American as a stage figure has been familiar to the public since the beginnings of American national literature and culture. As an evident social reality, he also had to appear in literature. However, up to about 1930, in the professional American theatre, he remained nothing more than a stereotyped figure on the perimeter of the action. He was stamped as the "stage Negro" and in his function resembled the "stage Jew" and the "stage Irishman". In accordance with the interest of the ruling class and its culture, he had been degraded to represent either the primitive and comical "simple Simon" or the religious and sentimental "Uncle Tom". It has been persistently suggested to the almost exclusively white audiences of the Broadway theatres, which even today in their highly commercialized form are practically without competition in the way in which they determine the American theatrical scene on the national level, that the colored man is not a worthy or full personality, capable of reflecting the true climaxes and depths of human life and suffering, thinking and emotion on the stage. Even in 1936, the drama scholar Arthur Hobson Quinn, in his comprehensive "History of the American Drama", tried to tell the playwrights that "the negro, in his wistful, exalted and emotional phases, is much better suited to the stage than when he is being exploited as the symbol of a struggle for racial equality".[1]

However, the course of history could not be stopped or turned back even by such reactionary "advice" as this. It was precisely that decade which brought the greatest economic shock ever experienced by the capitalist system of the United States which put the Black American, as a dramatic figure, in a new light and brought an entirely new quality of artistic representation in his individual experience of life and in his social position in the USA. This was not, of course, an isolated phenomenon which suddenly emerged but a logical development. It was closely linked with the changed social conditions - such as the harsh deterioration in the social and economic plight of the black population - and the upsurge in working class cultural activities (especially the Workers' Theatre Movement). So it can be seen as the expression of increased activity and greater political consciousness on the part of the working class.

A significant role in this process was played by the Communist Party of the USA. In 1929, it had established itself as a Marxist-Leninist party, devoting more marked attention than hitherto to the problems and situation of the Afro-Americans, clearly outlining the class-character of the so-called race problem. In the election campaign of 1932, it nominated the wellknown workers' leader William Z. Foster as a candidate for the Presidency. But for the Vice-Presidency it nominated the Negro leader James W. Ford. He was a former steelworker from Alabama whose grandfather was lynched by the Ku Klux Klan. The election program called for equal rights for the Afro-Americans, drastic action on the part of the State against any kind of discrimination against the black population and the organized struggle of white and black workers against their common oppressors.[2]

It was above all the writers of the younger generation who took a lively interest in all the real social problems and contradictions with which they were surrounded and who used their pens to wage a determined struggle against backwardness, deceit and deliberate manipulation by capitalist monopolies in the relations between the black and white masses. Playwrights of both races joined the struggle and made the Afro-American, his suffering and his heroic fight for respect and equality the subject of their creative work. They moved away from the traditional stereotype figures and helped to destroy the myth carefully cultivated by the ruling class of the intellectual incapacity and inferiority of the black man which was allegedly due to biological factors and to the will of God. As a generalization, the following can be stated for the period of the 1930's:

- The Afro-American was no longer shown on the stage as an "exotic creature" or naive and impudent domestic but was "discovered" as the hard-working Negro fighting for existence.
- A "new hero" emerged: the black man who was conscious both of his race and of his class, i. e. a dramatic figure who has recognized that racism is a class-question which is an inherent part of American imperialism and is deliberately guided by the ruling power structure.
- It was above all in the plays of the proletarian and revolutionary authors that the relationship between whites and Blacks was shown in an entirely new light: for the first time in the history of the American drama, the character of a white person is introduced who, from a clear political and ideological concept (Marxist-Leninist), consciously and without strings helps the Negro people in their fight for human dignity and equality.
- For the first time, real and vital issues of racist conflicts were put on the stage, to some extent even in documentary form (as in connection with the infamous case of the Scottsboro Boys) and the inhuman behaviour of many white people (especially in the Southern states) toward the black population was depicted more openly and was consequently even more strongly attacked than in the preceding years.
- Finally, this decade produced a number of black playwrights who, with their socio-critical plays, even to some extent broke into the commercial theatre. The outstanding example of this is Langston Hughes' "Mulatto" (1935) with 270 performances at a theatre on Broadway.

Two plays from this time show these new qualities in American drama in particularly examplary fashion: "Scottsboro, Limited" (1931) by Langston Hughes and "Stevedore" (1934) by Paul Peters and George Sklar. Both plays can certainly serve as guides for the young black protest drama of the present time which not by chance is attempting to link up with the cultural traditions of the "Red Decade". "Scottsboro, Limited" is the direct artistic confrontation of a young black author with a topical event which was soon to achieve national and international significance and has become a model case of chauvinist race and class justice on the one hand and of victory for worldwide solidarity by progressive black and white forces on the other. At the end of March 1931, in Scottsboro, Alabama, nine young Negroes were thrown into jail for the alleged rape of two white girls and, except for the youngest, a boy of thirteen years, were sentenced to death by the electric chair. Thanks to the immediate initiative of the Communist Party and of the International Labor Defense (led by the distinguished Afro-American lawyer and politician William L. Patterson), it was possible to prevent the executions from taking place, as a first success. However, it was still a question of almost two decades before this attempt at legal lynching was defeated. Langston Hughes published his poetic one-act play in the "New Masses", a Marxist politico-cultural journal, in November 1931 and, completely in the spirit of the proletarian revolutionary artists, used art as a weapon - a weapon in the fight to free the wrongfully convicted black lads. The author leaves no doubt as to his own standpoint and makes it unmistakably clear that the communists unreservedly take sides with their black and oppressed brothers and that here it is a question of a class confrontation which calls for the union of all anti-racist forces, whatever the color of their skin. But especially worth noting here is the fact that Hughes, in this dramatic work, which incidentally

owes a great deal to the agitprop theatre of the time, also widens the horizon, goes from an individual case to the essence of the problem and identifies the Scottsboro affair as something which is inherent in the system. This is also the reason why the play ends with a specific appeal for unity of action by black and white workers and for a common struggle for a better world ("Black and White together/Will fight the great fight"), with the audience being directly drawn into this and compelled to take sides.

The second outstanding play about the actual situation of the Afro-Americans in American society of the thirties is "Stevedore", which was staged by the Theatre Union in 1934. It was written jointly by Paul Peters and George Sklar and was one of the most successful plays of the first professional workers' theatre of the USA. The two white proletarian revolutionary authors give an indication of the same consistent Marxist outlook as Langston Hughes and, logically enough, come to the same conclusions although the plot and the presentation differ considerably from the first-mentioned play. Even today, by reason of its ideological clarity and artistic impact, this full-length play occupies a special place in the American drama. "Stevedore" depicts in a dramatically convincing form the relations between Blacks and whites in the United States in a new and revolutionary manner which had never before been seen on an American stage. In impressive fashion, the action shows that the capitalist exploiter is the common foe of the black and white workers and that he makes use of the race prejudices which he deliberately encourages and of the backwardness in the thinking of both sides to his own advantage. In their lecture at the first "American Writers' Congress" in 1935, Michael Blankfort and Nathaniel Buchwald had the following to say about "Stevedore": "This play ... was more than a contribution to the theatre. It proclaimed, once and for all, and for the first time, the heroic position of the Negro working class. It has become a standard bearer for the Negro masses and has been taken to heart by them as nothing else has."[3] And in her biography of Robeson this was written by Marie Seton about it: "For the first time in the theatre Negroes were shown fighting for their rights and their lives, with white workers joining them in their resistance to a racist mob. Lonnie Thompson was the first class-conscious Negro character to be the hero of a play and die a heroic death in defence of his union and his people."[4]

Opinions such as these explain why it was precisely this play which became so significant for the development of Paul Robeson as an artist and as a person. When the play was produced at the "Embassy Theatre" in London in 1935, Robeson played the role of the black docker Lonnie Thompson and interpreted it with great artistic sensitiveness so that this workers' drama was a noteworthy success in London, too. It was at this time that Robeson passed through a decisive phase in his personal confrontation with social reality and in forming his own view of the world. It was particularly after his return to Great Britain from his first visit to the Soviet Union that he had begun to concern himself seriously with Marxism-Leninism and to systematically study the works of Marx, Engels and Lenin. A play like "Stevedore" and the role of its black hero were in full accord with his newly acquired insight and gave him the opportunity to fuse artistic genius and ideological conviction with emotional fervour and political clarity in a way which had never been done before. What fascinated him most of all, however, was the basic idea of the play: the solidarity of the black and white workers. The fundamental statement by Karl Marx that "labor cannot emancipate itself in a white skin where in the black it is branded,"[5] seemed to have been taken to heart here and interpreted in a creative way as a doctrine for the working class.

It is then not surprising that Paul Robeson again played the role of a labor leader three years later in a proletarian play produced by the "Unity Theatre" in London. In "Plant in the Sun" by Ben Bengal, Paul Robeson played the trade union organizer and the leader of a sit-down strike in an American factory. This short play for the workers' amateur dramatics group is a didactic work which depicts the gradual development of unity in young workers who were never before in a situation of class struggle such as this. The common cause allows them to think and act in a new way and, from the chaotic indivual ideas of the various workers, a genuine group and class consciousness develops. The performance was a success and this was due not least to the great impact made by this illustrious Afro-American artist who, by virtue of his personality and talent, turned the inexperienced amateur actors from the English proletariat into a convincing ensemble. Of no lesser significance, however, was the fact that here was an outstanding professional artist working directly and closely with an organization for working class culture. Robeson and the actors of "Unity Theatre" came from the same class and it was the consciousness of the common struggle for the common aims which made this fruitful collaboration possible. At the same time, Robeson again demonstrated in his person and by his immediate artistic example how black and white people can work together on the basis of membership of the same class and can make a real contribution to the "Black Liberation Movement". The present conditions have certainly become more complicated and considerably more complex relations have developed since the thirties but the basic experience of Paul Robeson and the Workers' Theatre Movement is neither out of date nor replaceable. "The New Program of the Communist Party U. S. A." of 1969 emphatically states this: "The struggle against racism ... is a central part of the class struggle and the basic question facing the entire country today."[6]

The actual continuation of the markedly socio-critical American drama consciously aiming at revolutionary change did not appear until the 1960's. Since the fifties, the American theatre of the ruling culture, subject to the strangle-hold of total commercialization and used as an instrument for manipulation by the class interest of monopoly capitalism, has become an out-and-out entertainment enterprise and a place of escapism, whilst the so-called "Underground Theatre" with its confused, intellectual and anarchistic avant-garde drama of nihilism and despair only represents a pseudoalternative. It is from the Afro-American theatre an increasingly more powerful stimulus is coming for a new orientation. The wealth of socially relevant dramatic works with something to say from black authors as a contribution to American national literature - beginning, say, with Lorraine Hansberry's successful "A Raisin in the Sun" (1959) - has given hope even to leading theatrical critics of the ruling culture, such as Robert Brustein, that the eternally lamented stagnation and sterility of contemporary American theatre and drama can be overcome and that authors such as James Baldwin, Ossie Davis and LeRoi Jones could become the successors of playwrights such as Clifford Odets, Lillian Hellman or Arthur Miller.[7]

The social reasons for this development are evident. Increased activities of the Civil Rights Movement; polarization of the contending forces; crystallization of the demands of Afro-Americans, such as "Freedom Now!", "Black Power" as a political force and "Power to the People". All these, plus the sharpening of the confrontation with the racist whites and police brutality during the periods of unrest in the ghettos of the sixties have produced a new quality in the "Black Liberation Movement". Today, it permits neither a burlesque, sentimental, minstrel-show type depiction of Afro-American life in the earlier Broadway manner nor an above-the-battle position, a noncommittal sympathizing on the part of the white bourgeois author.

Just as with the dramatic treatment of the strike

motif in the thirties, the figure of the Afro-American and the so-called race problem in the USA force the author to make a clear statement in the sense of the old union song "Which side are you on?". It is incidentally characteristic that the plays of the few white authors who fully understood what the score was were not performed on Broadway. In fact, Edward Albee had to go abroad to get his short drama "The Death of Bessie Smith" (1960) performed at all, whilst George Sklar's "And People All Around" (1967) and Barrie Stavis' "Harpers Ferry" (1967) only achieved a series of noteworthy performances outside the New York theatre centre. It is precisely the two last-mentioned plays which are entirely in the tradition of the progressive drama of the thirties and, of course, also come from authors who helped shape this decade in the sphere of proletarian revolutionary drama. Sklar, co-author of "Stevedore" to which reference has already been made, in "And People All Around" took the infamous lynching of the three Civil Rights fighters, James Chaney, Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner, as the background for the personal decision of a young white Southerner for or against humanity and justice. Stavis, known above all for his Galileo drama "Lamp at Midnight" and the documentary play about Joe Hill, "The Man Who Never Died", depicts the same basic conflict on the basis of what is certainly the most famous case in American history, the heroic and consistent efforts of John Brown for the immediate liberation of the black slaves. On the basis of historically proven facts, both plays solve the situation of conflict quite clearly in accord with the aims of the freedom struggle of the Afro-American people and portray really human attitudes on the part of white U. S. citizens.

However, one of the characteristic features in the development of American dramatic art in the past decade is that the relations between the black and white populations of the country, which have developed into the main internal and socio-political problem of the USA, have become the domain par excellence of Afro-American playwrights. The noteworthy number of dramatic works from the pens of black authors reflects the whole complexity of the actual socio-political situation of the Afro-Americans in a period of growing aggressiveness in the imperialist policy of oppression and, simultaneously, the variety in the forms of the struggle against and resistance to white supremacy and racism in the USA.

Living in the same ghettos and under the same conditions of discrimination as the overwhelming majority of their race, the Afro-American playwrights have become real writers of the people. The pressure of their environment and everyday experience compelled them to take this direction and from the very start precluded a retreat to an ivory tower of art. As propagandists and agitators, enlighteners and mass educators, they are aiding the consolidation of the politico-moral and cultural unity of the black minority.

They regard as their main task the countering and repulsion of the influence of the dominating American or Western culture, of which LeRoi Jones once said that it "is committed to the idea of individualism, egosatisfaction, and personal gain".[8] Just as the "gradualism" of the Civil Rights Movement gave way to revolutionary demands insisting on immediate change, so did the thesis of separation and of "otherness" begin to replace that of assimilation and integration.

Since the beginning of the sixties, in particular, the call is again being made for the constitution of a "Black Nation" and for the emergence of a cultural system with its own laws for the Afro-American population. This emergence of a "Black national and cultural consciousness" also includes the elaboration of new standards and the establishment of aesthetic images of its own, based both on the Afro-American and on the Black African line of tradition. Study of the African heritage and identification with it has begun on a broad scale. The study and the "discovery" of their own African past, of the variety of tribal habits and customs and of cultural achievements are promoting - and this applies especially to the young Afro-Americans - an historical consciousness and aesthetic appreciation of a kind unparalleled hitherto. The disengagement from the white sphere of influence, which nolens volens has stamped the intellectual profile of the black authors, and the confrontation with the code of values of the dominating American system of society is a process which is exerting a profound influence on personality structure and which, to some extent, is of an extremely contradictory character. Often it is encumbered with the conscious or unconscious adoption of pettybourgeois anarchistic, nationalist, pseudo-radical and terrorist ideas and therefore is diverted into apolitical, anthropological or socio-psychological directions. The uncompromising attitudes and the hostility resulting from the actual situation towards the white system of open and covert repression, naturally involve the danger of an indiscriminate "anti-white" attitude. They can lead to the incorrect hypothesis that the entire white world is degenerate, doomed to downfall, and incapable of modelling the true self-realization of Man. Although the Communist Party of the USA has unceasingly declared that racism is an integral part of the capitalist system and of imperialism, many Afro-American intellectuals and artists have not yet been able fully to accept the class nature and character of the so-called race problem.

Within the framework of his historical task in American society, the black playwright of the present time is faced with a complicated dual function and challenged by a twofold problem. In the first place, it is a question of the merciless and uncompromising confrontation of the racist white people with their own deformed mirror-image. In artistic form it demonstrates to them the whole range of their inhumanity both individual and social. It both unmasks and accuses; it is social criticism and a declaration of readiness for combat. If reflects the conflict between Black and white not only in skin color but in morals and ethics, too. Secondly, the black author turns to his fellow Afro-American citizens. He describes their worries and sorrows, their strength and weakness, their good and bad deeds so that they recognize themselves and their human dignity; they perceive that they are beings worthy of a place in literature; they see through the pattern of the "Negro type" disseminated by the white mass-media and learn to reject it. So this writing deals with the modelling of a new human image and education, with selfcriticism and moral renewal - with conflicts among the black people themselves which of course are always shown to arise through living in a repressive social environment.

With the thrust into the ideological and psychological terrain of the adversary, the attack is preferably concentrated on the so-called liberals or those whites who, as individuals, are apparently endeavouring to overcome all racist prejudice, seek partnership with their black fellow-men but cannot drop a patriarchal and patronizing tone, are ready to give "good advice" on the waging of the struggle for Black Liberation but draw back in a conventional manner when the cards are down. The attitude of many contemporary Afro-American authors towards the "liberals" is aptly reflected by a remark of Malcolm X on this question: "For one, when a white man comes to me and tells me how liberal he is, the first thing I want to know, is he a nonviolent liberal, or the other kind. I don't go for any nonviolent white liberals. If you are for me and my problems - when I say me, I mean us, our people - then you have to be willing to do as old John Brown did. And if you're not of the John Brown school of liberals, we'll get you later - later."[9] So-called liberalism in the question of the relations between black and white people in the United States, through its retreat before every radical and rapid solution to the unbearable situation, has

revealed itself as hypocrisy and, when examined in an objective manner, furthers the interests of the racists, whether this is the conscious intention or not. For this reason and justly so, it is rejected by the Afro-Americans.

In the plays and dramatic scenes in which the authors concern themselves primarily with the Afro-American sphere, the criticism is chiefly aimed at the conciliating elements in their own ranks, at the "Uncle Toms", who have made their "private peace" with the white system of suppression, who bear all humiliations with a smile or even consciously imitate the white middle-class way of life. Above all, they scorn also those who let themselves be used as a front or as a liberal cloak for the white power structure and, as some of the few privileged persons of this structure, help to conceal the true situation of the black masses.

In the efforts being made in the artistic confrontation with the white oppressors, another trend is evident in more recent drama, namely the deliberate shock-effect on the saturated, narrow-minded middle-class citizen and principal supporter of racist chauvinism. Some Afro-American writers are attempting to provoke the white Babbitt by plain and frank language in which not even the concentrated use of obscenities is excluded and, at the same time, by a supposed wealth of relationships between the social and sexual aspects, to make clear to him, in the private sexual sphere, the total perversion of his social behaviour. However, the over-emphasis on shock and provocation reduces the power and unequivocalness of the social message. Not only has the dominating culture, in a way which is practically masochistic, found profitable pleasure in this kind of aggressive literature and drama and even has it published in mass editions, but in the meantime this means of protest has also changed to a thoroughly commercialized instrument of diversion. Also plays such as "Blues for Mister Charlie" (1964) by James Baldwin, "Dutchman" (1964), "The Slave" (1964), "The Toilet" (1964) and "Slave Ship" (1969) by LeRoi Jones or the numerous short plays by Ed Bullins reflect the whole complexity of this situation and give a particularly clear indication of the problems involved in the analysis of works which have resulted from the sad sphere of life and experience of precisely those people who merit our entire sympathy and active solidarity. "Blues for Mister Charlie", for instance, which has found attentive audiences in the GDR as well, is based on an actual social event: the unpunished murder of a Negro boy and a well-known Civil Rights leader. It reveals the fragility of the claim to material and intellectual supremacy of the white middle-class world but attempts to shift specifically social motivations to the sphere of sexual psychology and to shook the white middle-class individual as the incarnation of the impotence of an entire race and civilization which see brutality and terror as the sole answer. Only a sensitive and consistently Marxist-Leninist interpretation - such as that by the "Kellertheater" of Leipzig - is capable of representing the real social character of the play, with the elimination of the hypertrophy of the sexually related vocabulary, and of making it "both an artistic and social experience".[10] It is certainly self-deception to believe that what is pornographic can be switched over to become socio-critical. It is also without doubt a poor speculation when LeRoi Jones declares that the "Euro-American degeneration ... the white revolution of drugs and nakedness" should be supported for tactical reasons since it "weakens the hand that holds our fetters".[11]

Seen as a whole, Afro-American drama since the end of the fifties no longer contents itself with the depiction of the life and sufferings of the Black American in order to show him, so to speak, as a human creature worthy of respect and to warn white people of the necessity for understanding, reform or solidarity, but is indicating more and more bluntly a politico-ideological aim, namely the activation of the struggle of the Afro-Americans for equality in all social fields and the unconditional readiness to fight for the implementation of just this demand. Every opportunity is used for this: on-Bradway and off-Broadway and, above all and to an increased extent, their own professional and non-professional theatre companies and other "Black Arts" institutions. A broad range of artistic devices is also employed and, depending on the line of tradition and sphere of influence, determines the formal character of the plays. Critical-realist means of presentation are used in harmony with a specific criticism (as in Lorraine Hansberry in particular) or are linked with stream-of-consciousness techniques (as in James Baldwin); satirical, farcelike burlesque or folklore elements (as in the plays of Ossie Davis or Douglas Turner Ward) are utilized to the same extent as the modernistic alienation effects of the absurd and surrealist theatres (e. g. in the dramas of Adrienne Kennedy and William W. Mackey); naturalistic details for the depiction of slum and ghetto life (as in Lonne Elder) appear side by side with borrowings from Artaud's "Theatre of Cruelty" (as in plays by LeRoi Jones and Ed Bullins). Common to all of them, however, is the passionate and very often also aggressive character of their protest and a basic ideological position which is revolutionary and insists on a change in the social system, all stylistic details and techniques being subordinate to this aim - at least subjectively. LeRoi Jones, the most outstanding of the militant dramatists of the younger generation and one of the initiators of the Black Arts Movement, as far back as 1964 called for a "Revolutionary Theatre", which means for him a primarily Afro-American revolutionary theatre in which the drama is used as a political weapon which "should force change; it should be change", which "is shaped by the world, and moves to reshape the world". Jones also declares that "The Revolutionary Theatre must Expose ... must Accuse and Attack anything that can be accused and attacked."[12]

For the great majority of the Afro-American playwrights of the present time, the theatre as no more than a place of entertainment is quite simply an absurdity. For them, the stage - as at the time of the Workers' Theatre Movement of the thirties - is a field of agitation. Consequently, there had to be a renewal of the "street theatre" with short "street plays", the emergence of a Black Revolutionary Agitprop movement. There is already a noteworthy number of mobile agitprop groups and plays in which artists and authors speak out directly and exclusively for the black population itself. At street corners and on open spaces, in front of schools and on the campus, they try to enlighten and educate people with a plot which is limited to a few, simplified facts about the main circumstances of life. Ed Bullins, himself the author of a whole series of agitprop plays for the "street theatre", has set out the main purpose of "Black Revolutionary Agitprop": "Communicating to masses of Black people. Contact with Black crowds. Communication with diverse classes of people, the Black working class, or with special groups (e. g., winos, pool hall brothers, prostitutes, pumps, hypes, etc.) who would not ordinarily come or be drawn into the theatre."[13]

Attempts such as these by a black revolutionary agitprop theatre are certainly an enrichment of Afro-American drama and theatrical practice and also an important step towards close links between art and life, between the theatre and politics. However, there is still a need - and not only here in this artistic instrument of mass agitation - for further ideological clarification of the essential objectives so that a restriction of the field of vision to an undifferentiated black-white conflict does not occur. Langston Hughes and Paul Robeson showed the way as far back as the thirties! Lorraine Hansberry, in her realist plays, successfully and consistently explored this path until a terrible disease took this young and highly talented playwright from our midst. Above all, the works she has left us, such as "Les Blancs" (1966) and the scenic

montage by Robert Nemiroff of the life and literary career of the author, "To Be Young, Gifted, and Black" (1969), are evidence of her ability to show even complicated processes of the Black Liberation Movement of the recent past in a dramatically effective and class-oriented manner. Nothing expresses this more clearly than the words of an African freedom fighter in "Les Blancs" with which he counters the stereotyped ideas of a "liberal" American journalist: "I shall be honest with you, Mr. Morris. I do not 'hate' all white men - but I desperately wish that I did. It would make everything infinitely easier! But I am afraid that, among other things, I have seen the slums of Liverpool and Dublin and the caves above Naples. I have seen Dachau and Anne Frank's attic in Amsterdam. I have seen too many rawknuckled Frenchmen coming out of the Metro at dawn and too many popeyed Italian children - to believe that those who raided Africa for three centuries ever 'loved' the white race either. I would like to be simpleminded for you, but - I cannot. I have - seen."[14] James Baldwin could be the successor to Lorraine Hansberry. From his "Open Letter" to Angela Davis, we may justifiably hope that in the near future he will master the artistic and dramatic aspects of that which he has already correctly grasped in theory when he wrote to the imprisoned university professor and communist: "We know that we, the blacks, and not only we, the blacks, have been, and are, the victims of a system whose only fuel is greed, whose only god is profit."[15]

However, a sure characteristic of both the more recent and the older Afro-American drama - even when account is taken of all the variety of its essential and formal aspects - is that plays by Afro-American authors are not just interesting documents of a literary genre resulting from the events of the age but at the same time imply the sum of experience accumulated in the course of more than 350 years by people who have become Americans against their will. It is true that these plays are part of American national culture and literature but just as little as the 25 million Afro-Americans enjoy the full rights of citizens of the United States are they a reflection of the ruling culture in the USA. These are plays of protest, of direct and indirect accusation, and of the long and sad history of oppression and resistance to oppression - the expression of the "other America". They consequently maintain and continue the democratic-humanist and proletarian-revolutionary heritage and, together with other literary works by black and white progressive authors, form an important part of the second culture in the United States, i. e. to quote Lenin, they are "elements of a democratic and socialist culture".[16]

In a particularly moving and beautiful poetic vision from "To Be Young, Gifted, and Black" the unforgettable Lorraine Hansberry speaks about Robeson, whose personality gave impulses for the struggle to all antiimperialist forces in the world. Lorraine Hansberry, the former colleague on Robeson's newspaper "Freedom" says:

> "We know where we're going and we know how we're going to get there ... It's going to spill out and over the world from our art like the mighty waves of a great spiritual! ... I could see the bridge across the chasm. It was made up of a band of angels of art, hurling off the souls of twenty million! I saw Jimmy Baldwin and Leontyne, and Lena and Harry and Sammy, and then there was Charlie White and Nina Simone and - - Lord have mercy, Paul was back![17]

Notes

1 Quinn, A. H.: "A History of the American Drama. From the Civil War to the Present Day". New York 1936, p. 284

2 See "Culture and the Crisis". An Open Letter to the Writers, Artists, Teachers, Physicians, Engineers, Scientists, and other Professional Workers of America. New York 1932.

3 Blankfort, M./Buchwald, N.: "Social Trends in the Modern Drama". In: "American Writers Congress". London 1935, p. 133.

4 Seton, M.: "Paul Robeson". London 1958, p. 102.

5 Marx, K.: "Capital". New York 1939, p. 287.

6 "New Program of the Communist Party U. S. A.", New York 1970, p. 58

7 Brustein, R.: "Seasons of Discontent. Dramatic Opinions 1959-1965". London 1966, p. 311 f.

8 Jones, LeRoi: "Home. Social Essays". New York 1966, p. 219.

9 "Malcolm X Speaks". Selected Speeches and Statements. Ed. by George Breitman. New York 1966, p. 225.

10 Diskussion um "Blues". In: "Leipziger Volkszeitung", 23. Mai 1969.

11 See "New York Times". Quoted after Sahl, Hans: "Ketten werden abgeschüttelt". In: "Die Welt", 27. Februar 1970.

12 Jones, LeRoi: "Home", p. 210 ff.

13 Bullins, E.: "A Short Statement on Street Theatre". In: "The Drama Review". Summer 1968, p. 93.

14 Hansberry, L.: "Les Blancs". Adapted by Robert Nemiroff. 1970. MS 1/3/48.

15 Baldwin, J.: "An Open Letter to my Sister, Miss Angela Davis". In: "The New York Review of Books". January 7, 1971, p. 15 f.

16 Lenin, W. I.: "Kritische Bemerkungen zur nationalen Frage." In: W. I. Lenin, "Über Kultur und Kunst", Berlin 1960. S. 209.

17 "To Be Young, Gifted, and Black. The World of Lorraine Hansberry In Her Own Words". Adapted by Robert Nemiroff. New York 1971, pp. 98 f.

A Great Personality
Excerpt from an Interview with Paul Robeson
By T. THOMPSON
published in "The Millgate", London, 1930

Most of us have heard Paul Robeson sing spirituals on the wireless or the gramophone, but to hear him in person is a great and moving experience. To see him act is even more stirring. His magnificent stature and terrific intensity make him undoubtedly one of the impressive personalities on the stage today. His "Othello" has been one of the events of the season.

I met him in his dressing-room at the Palace Theatre, Manchester, where he had been giving a selection of Negro spirituals and the first act of Eugene O'Neill's "Emperor Jones." He was still in the costume; but I found him ready to talk on any matter concerning his art and his race.

Paul Robeson is proud of his race and deeply concerned with its progress.

I mentioned that Sir Richard Terry wrote with some disparagement of Negro spirituals, and Robeson smiled. "Sir Richard Terry and other critics seem to miss the point," he said, "Negro spirituals have the same value as other folk songs, and there are many excellent melodies amongst them. But they are also an expression of the yearnings of a people to be delivered from bondage. And the Bible held our promise of better times in the next world. But in Africa the Negro has a music of his own." (Here he drew himself up and his eyes glowed). "Let me tell you. I shall come back from Africa within five years with a music that is as revolutionary as other phases of Negro art. The Negro in Africa is not tied down to half or quarter tones, or any European musical conventions."

"About modern sculpture and painting," said I. "That is a fine head that Epstein has done from you. I fancy the Negro has had his share in the forming of modern ideas in art."

"Epstein is a great sculptor," said Robeson. "In Africa (the true home of the Negro, not America) German and French explorers found pieces of sculpture - mainly in wood - equal, if not superior, to anything done by the ancient Greeks. The Greeks were mainly concerned with bodily perfection, and this ideal was reflected in their sculpture - so long held up as a pattern. The Negro reached forward to his gods and his conception of spiritual essentials. If his sculpture expressed the intensity of his feelings he did not care whether his carvings looked like human beings or not. Ancient negroid sculpture profoundly impressed sculptors like Epstein and painters - notably Matisse - who found themselves unsatisfied with the mere copying of Nature. Modern French art is especially indebted to the creative art of the Negro." ...

On the stage there is a great shy man in a dress-suit singing songs like "Ol' Man River" and "Go down, Moses" with a voice of rare beauty. There is something magnetic in these crooning melodies and the way they are sung. A passionate burst of song and a whole people voices its surging appeal:

O, Moses, the cloud shall cleave the way,
Let My people go;
A fire by night, a shade by day.
Let My people go.
Go down, Moses,
Way down in Egypt land,
Tell ole Pharaoh,
Let My People go.

If there are critics who think there is nothing in the Negro spiritual let them hear Paul Robeson sing. They will soon change their minds.

Reflections on O'Neill's Plays
By PAUL ROBESON
published in "Opportunity", December 1924

All this seems so very strange to me - writing about the theatre. If, three years ago, someone had told me that I would be telling of my reactions as an actor I would have laughed indulgently. Even now the whole chain of events has a distinct dream-like quality. To have had the opportunity to appear in two of the finest plays of America's most distinguished playwright is a good fortune that to me seems hardly credible. Of course I am very, very happy. And with these things there has come a great love of the theatre, which I am sure will always hold me fast.

In retrospect all the excitement about "All God's Chillun" seems rather amusing, but at the time of the play's production, it caused many an anxious moment. All concerned were absolutely amazed at the ridiculous critical reaction. The play meant anything and everything from segregated schools to various phases of intermarriage.

To me the most important pre-production development, was an opportunity to play the "Emperor Jones," due to an enforced postponment. This is undoubtedly one of "the great plays" - a true classic of the drama, American or otherwise. I recall how marvelously it was played by Mr. Gilpin some years back. And the greatest praise I could have received was the expression of some that my performance was in some wise comparable to Mr. Gilpin's.

And what a great part is "Brutus Jones." It is the exultant tragedy of the disintegration of a human soul. How we suffer as we see him in the depths of the forest re-living all the sins of his past - experiencing all the woes and wrongs of his people - throwing off one by one the layers of civilization until he returns to the primitive soil from which he (racially) came. And yet we exult when we realize that here was a man who in the midst of all his trouble fought to the end and finally died in the "'eighth of style anyway."

In "All God's Chillun" we have the struggle of a man and woman, both fine human beings, struggling against forces they could not control, - indeed, scarcely comprehend - accentuated by the almost Christ-like spiritual force of the Negro husband, a play of great strength and beautiful spirit, mocking all petty prejudice, emphasizing, the humanness, and in Mr. O'Neill's words, "the oneness" of mankind.

I now come to perhaps the main point of my discussion. Any number of people have said to me: "I trust that now you will get a truly heroic and noble role, one portraying the finest type of Negro." I honestly believe that perhaps never will I portray a nobler type than "Jim Harris" or a more heroically tragic figure than "Brutus Jones, Emperor," not excepting "Othello."

The Negro is only a medium in the creation of a work of the greatest artistic merit. The fact that he is a Negro Pullman Porter is of little moment. How else account for the success of the play in Paris, Berlin, Copenhagen, Moscow and other places on the Continent. Those people never heard of a Negro porter. Jones's emotions are not primarily Negro, but human.

Objections to "All God's Chillun" are rather well known. Most of them have been so foolish that to attempt to answer them is to waste time. The best answer is that audiences that came to scoff went away in tears, moved by a sincere and terrifically tragic drama.

The reactions to these two plays among Negroes but point out one of the most serious drawbacks to the development of a true Negro dramatic literature. We are too self-conscious, too afraid of showing all phases of our life, - especially those phases which are of greatest dramatic value. The great mass of our group discourage any member who has the courage to fight these petty prejudices.

I am still being damned all over the place for playing in "All God's Chillun." It annoys me very little when I realize that those who object most strenuously know mostly nothing of the play and who in any event know little of the theatre and have no right to judge a playwright of O'Neill's talents.

I have met and talked with Mr. O'Neill. If ever there was a broad, liberal-minded man, he is one. He has had Negro friends and appreciated them for their true worth. He would be the last to cast any slur on the colored people.

Of course I have just begun. I do feel there is a great future on the serious dramatic stage. Direction and training will do much to guide any natural ability one may possess. At Provincetown I was privileged to be under the direction of Mr. James Light. I'm sure even he thought I was rather hopeless at first. I know I did. But he was patient and painstaking, and any success I may have achieved I owe in great measure to

Mr. Light. I sincerely hope I shall have the benefit of his splendid guidance in the future.

What lies ahead I do not know. I am sure that there will come Negro playwrights of great power and I trust I shall have some part in interpreting that most interesting and much needed addition to the drama of America.

Paul Robeson Shakespearian-Debut Interview by R. C. published in "The Era", London, May 21, 1930

Before I went to meet Mr. Paul Robeson in person, I spent some time in getting to know him through his wife's book, "Paul Robeson: Negro" (Victor Gollancz, 10/6), which has just been published. I read there of his ancestors, and their place in the early days of American history; of his boyhood and the wise father whose aim it was to keep his son working hard with "his feet on the ground and his head in the clouds"; of his University career, his winning of a degree in Law, and his first start in that profession; and of his going on the stage and the concert platform by way of the Provincetown Players. The book is grounded unreservedly in admiration; from it I gained an impression of a fine, open, and modest nature which was fully justified when later I visited Mr. Robeson in his dressing-room at the Savoy Theatre.

We spoke, naturally, of his appearance in Shakespeare, and I asked him if his aquaintance with Othello was a long one.

"I've known it as a play since I was a boy," he said "and have seen two or three performances of it in America. As a part I have known it for about eight weeks."

"Do you spend a lot of time alone studying a part?"

"As a rule I like to think things out for a very long while, but in the present instance I came straight from a concert tour, on which I appeared five times a week so I have only been able to give just about a couple of months to getting to know what my part is about. I always try first to come to a good solid understanding of a character, and build up the feeling; as for the acting, I leave that until I get into the theatre. It is impossible to do much by yourself, for everything is so altered as soon as you find yourself on the stage with other people."

"What was it you looked for in this part?"

"I tried to find out exactly what Shakespeare was getting at. A great deal has been written about his plays and his characters, and a number of contradictory conclusions have been come to. It seems to be the opinion of some people that you can read more or less, what you like into his work. But I'm quite sure that when Shakespeare wrote a play he didn't mean ninety-five different things; and it is the duty of his interpreters to come as closely as possible to what he felt. Shakespeare was a great human being who saw no character from one angle. His creations are therefore consistent, but many-sided; and each of their phases is emphasized. I suppose I ought to be speaking to you of Othello, but let us leave him for a moment for Hamlet. He is a complex character which it is possible to approach in different ways. There is 'the melancholy Dane'; Mr. Ainley's Hamlet was not melancholy, however, but thrilling. Again, you have the man's intellectual quality, and the emotionalism which makes him 'go off the top end.' What Shakespeare did was to bring out every side, and what the actor has to do is to show as many of these as possible, though he can never hope to arrive completely at Shakespeare's creation; that would be too much to ask.

"So any one who approaches Othello must remember that part of him which is crude savage, and makes him murder his wife; his dignity, nobility and quietness as well. After all, any nice person is liable to do terrible things under the influence of a great passion. The secret of understanding him, however, is to find not yourself in the character, but Shakespeare, from whose mind, experience and observation he came. The musician who says, 'I'll interpret Beethoven,' puts in what the composer meant. And the actor should do the same with Shakespeare's creations. And what wonderful support he gets! For Shakespeare was the greatest dramatist; there is no line of his which doesn't come to life in the theatre."

"If Shakespeare had written 'Othello' to-day, would it have been a different play?"

"I don't think so. The play is very modern in feeling as it stands. We are able to appreciate Shakespeare's mind better than his contemporaries. The Elizabethans did not properly understand him, nor realize that so great a man was living among them. He was not a member of the Court, but he was kicked about from place to place. To me it is extraordinary how Shakespeare, at that time was able to get to the root of the racial question. I feel it here," said Mr. Robeson, striking his breast, "when as Othello I walk into the Senate, among all those people who in their hearts hate me, but fear me and know they must use me. I have known instances of the same sort of thing to-day; when, for example, the only skilful physician in a town has been a Negro, and the people, during an epidemic have had to go to him to be saved from death. Shakespeare grasped this principle perfectly, and 'Othello' is, if anything, more apt to-day than when it was first written.

"And now," continued Mr. Robeson, "I should like to correct an impression which has got about owing to a remark of mine as to the race of Othello having been twisted. I meant to say that whatever he was, Arabic or Ethiopian, he was a member of a darker race. Anyway, since he came from Africa he must have had some Ethiopian blood in him. And as one drop of white blood in a Negro is supposed by some people to account for all his abilities and good qualities, so surely I am justified in taking the drop of Negro blood in Othello as the basis of my interpretation of him."

"Do you miss opportunities for singing in 'Othello?'"

"No, I feel that Othello was a man of action, not a singer, though he speaks music all the time. I think acting and singing should be separate, and I mean in the future not to mix the two."

"Do you agree with the opinion then, that opera is a bastard form of art, and false."

"Not at all; I love it. You have magnificent opera here at Covent Garden, and I am broken-hearted that my work prevents me from hearing it this season. But I don't think that an acting and singing role suits me personally; I have not the temperament for it. As for opera being false, there is much that is artificial in the straight theatre."

"Do you know any of Shakespeare's songs?"

"I have worked out a number with my friend Roger Quilter, and hope to introduce them on the concert platform in the future."

"Is Shakespeare understood and appreciated in America?"

"I should say he is. Look at the success the Stratford Players have just had over there. I once saw a Negro company do Shakespeare. It might have struck you with a sense of incongruity; but the flow and rhythm of voices was lovely. This feeling of strangeness is to be found chiefly in England, the home of Shakespeare; that is why I am anxious to learn to play him in Germany, where they would be interested first in seeing what I could do, and would not be attracted merely by the novelty of the thing. Shakespeare is loved in Germany, where they have a translation of him which is marvellous, the equal almost of the original. In France

they are not able to appreciate him so highly, for their version of him is not a good one. The Italians, on the other hand, have a splendid translation, and Salvini was the greatest Othello of all."

"Have you any other Shakespearian roles in view?"

"If Othello is a success, I might do Shylock some day; or I might do Macbeth, well disguised in a beard."

Paul Robeson Told Me
Interview by JULIA DORN
issued by Theatre Arts Committee, July–August 1939

I feel closer to my country than ever. There is no longer a feeling of lonesome isolation. Instead - peace. I return without fearing prejudice that once bothered me. It does not hurt or anger me now, for I know, that people practice cruel bigotry in their ignorance, not maliciously.

"A little incident which occurred almost the first day of my return to U. S. A. in 1939 will show you what I mean about having changed inside. I was invited to a tea in one of the city's leading hotels. When I approached the front elevator, I was told to use the freight elevator (the white employee's idea of the Negroes' way to Heaven). Several years back I would have smarted at this insult and carried the hurt for a long time. Now - no - I was just amused and explained to the elevator boy that I didn't belong with the freight, that, as I was the guest of honor at the tea, my hosts might be surprised to see me arrive with the supplies. The elevator man caught the idea very quickly. His colleagues would, too, if they were taught all the facts. They will know, someday."

After ten years of successful concerts, movie and stage engagements abroad, Paul Robeson has come home. When I spoke with Paul four years ago and thousands of miles away from New York, he was more interested in Africa and the sources of Negro art than in returning to the United States. Naturally I was curious to know what had prompted his return.

"I've learned that my people are not the only ones oppressed. That it is the same for Jews in Germany as for Negroes, and that such prejudice has no place in a democracy. I have sung my songs all over the world, and everywhere found that some common bond makes the people of all lands take to Negro songs, as to their own.

"When I sang my American folk melodies in Budapest, Prague, Tbilissi, Moscow, Oslo, the Hebrides, or on the Spanish front, the people understood and wept or rejoiced with the spirit of the songs. I found that where forces have been the same, whether people weave, build, pick cotton, or dig in the mines, they understand each other in the common language of work, suffering and protest. Their songs were composed by men trying to make work easier, trying to find a way out ...

"Many of the old folk songs which are still young today echoed the terrific desire to escape bondage, such as the Negro protest song, 'How long must my people weep and mourn.' In Germany, today, when the oppressed commit suicide, or try to escape unbearable conditions, their actions cry out against the terrorized land they wish to leave. Our Moses, with its 'let my people go,' never meant going to Heaven - the direction was really the North. Sojourner Truth, a Negro woman rebel who worked with John Brown in the liberation movement in the nineteenth century, used to sing this song as she passed through the woods to a Negro settlement; and when the Negroes heard it, they knew it was a signal for a meeting.

"When I sing, 'let my people go,' I can feel sympathetic vibrations from my audience, whatever its nationality. It is no longer just a Negro song - it is a symbol of those seeking freedom from the dungeons of fascism in Europe today. The same is true for the refugees with 'Sometime I feel like a motherless child a long way from home - Come my brother'." Knowing Paul's devotion to folk songs, I asked him what he meant by the term 'folk,' which he used frequently.

"I mean the songs of people, of farmers, workers, miners, roaddiggers, chaingang laborers, that come from direct contact with their work, whatever it is. This folk music is as much a creation of a mass of people as language. Both are derived from social groups which had to communicate with each other and within each other. One person throws in a phrase. Then another - and when, as a singer, I walk from among the people, onto the platform, to sing back to the people the songs they themselves have created, I can feel a great unity, not only as a person, but as an artist who is one with his audience.

"This keeping close to the feelings and desires of my audiences has a lot to do with shaping my attitude toward the struggle of the people of the world. It has made me an anti-fascist, whether the struggle is in Spain, Germany or here.

"This, in turn, has made me see that the pseudo-scientific racial barriers which had been inculcated in me from cradle days upward were false. Even though I had won honors in university years, somehow these honors, instead of proving that color of skin made no difference, emphasized the difference all the more, since I was marked out as an exception to the rule.

"The feeling that all this is wrong, a feeling which has come from my travels, from world events which show that all oppressed people cry out against their oppressors - these have made my loneliness vanish, have made me come home to sing my songs so that we will see that our democracy does not vanish. If I can contribute to this as an artist, I shall be happy."

Naturally, my next question was pointed toward what Paul expected to do in this country.

"I suppose the artist, as an actor, is a bit more removed from direct contact with his source than the singer - yet there is fine folk material in the drama. Take "Emperor Jones", "Stevedore", "Mamba's Daughters", many of the Irish dramas, "The Cradle Will Rock" and others.

"Playing in Emperor Jones at White Plains recently warmed me. After that reintroduction to the American stage, I am very anxious to begin work on "John Henry", schedulded for production in the Fall. They wanted me to do "Othello" and "Macbeth" in the Soviet Union and in Scandinavia, they suggested "Peer Gynt". Now I am happy to play the Negro counterpart of "Peer Gynt" here - "John Henry", a real folk hero, in both song and literature."

Robeson's Contribution to British Working-Class Culture
By DIANA LOESER

In the GDR we are fortunate in having a cultural programme which can guide contemporary artists and writers in all the fields of cultural activity in their task to create a new culture. At the same time workers are encouraged to become familiar with the cultural heritage.

In the thirties when Paul Robeson was developing as

an artist, the first socialist country, the Soviet Union, led the struggle for a new culture and the preservation of the cultural heritage from fascism. The programmes of the international congresses on culture in the thirties were of vital significance for the conscious development of, for example, anti-fascist literature, and working class culture in every country, particularly in the European countries and the USA. The idea in Friedrich Wolf's essay 'Kunst ist Waffe' was popularised and taken up consciously by many artists. Robeson became part of this international cultural movement. Robeson himself often spoke of art as a weapon in the struggle for peace, social justice and socialism and his contribution to world culture is greater because he understood this and made it a central feature of his own creative work as an artist. No one can describe this better than Robeson himself: "Again and again I said that the masters of arts will fail to hide in ivory towers from the Nazi pestilence. Those who in those years preached pure art, an art unmixed with policy, served fascism; they betrayed their peoples, played into the hands of the enemies of freedom and democracy. Art is our weapon, I said, my weapon was my voice."

How did Robeson try to carry out this idea of art as a weapon in the struggle? If we examine the concert programmes of Robeson throughout the period after the mid thirties until his retirement we can observe that he sang negro spirituals and work songs. Not only did he elevate them to the concert platform, but he took away their "Uncle Tom ideology of quaintness" singing them as they were meant to be sung as the conscious expression of the misery and cruelty suffered by the Negro people and their determination to fight back. British workers, who it must be remembered had been among the first capitalist nations to be subjected to the full force of imperialist ideology of national chauvinism and the superiority of the white races, came to sing Negro songs. They understood Robeson's message, that there was a common bond between the exploited whether black or white. Not all of them understood the full meaning of Robeson's call to not only fight against their exploitation but for a new society. Nevertheless, he gave them a feeling of courage and strength in adversity which heartened them in the bitter struggles of the thirties. This was an important contribution to British working class culture, to give his audiences a feeling of solidarity with his black brothers, to give them renewed strength for the struggle. Would "John Brown's Body" have stayed in the forefront of marching songs without Robeson?

But Robeson's second great contribution was to educate his audience. His repertoire included not only Negro spirituals and work songs but classical Lieder, folk songs, political songs of various periods in history and international working class songs of struggle. He sought his audiences and he understood the class character of his audiences. This desire to educate his audiences came after his visit to the Soviet Union. He writes himself that after his visit to the SU in 1934 he returned to England and looked at England with new eyes: "At that time I learned for myself. I began to study the society I was living in for finding the right way of struggle for the equality of peoples. To imagine life without this struggle was impossible for me. I gave concerts in various towns of England, I sang for the rich and the poor. When critically examining my audiences I noticed that there was a deep gap between the ones and the others. The white working people suffered as much as the Negroes in the South. There was neither contempt nor hatred against me in their eyes."

Robeson began to educate his audience systematically, he never sang down to his worker audiences but on the contrary his concerts were of the very best. He introduced his audiences consciously to the great cultural heritage of classical music and popular music. His concert programmes were carefully balanced mixtures of spirituals and work songs, folk songs, hymns, all the best of the popular cultural heritage, classical Lieder especially of Russian composers and the international working class songs of struggle. If Robeson had simply wanted to educate his audiences to understand an appreciate classical and popular music he would have done something useful. But he would not have been very original or revolutionary in his work as an artist. Quite a number of intellectuals in Britain worried by the incursion of admass culture into cultural life and attempting to fight against it have in the style of dogooders attempted to ward off the enemy by preaching good culture to the poor.

What is different about Robeson? The clue lies in his political development. When he was the lion of London society Shaw met him at a reception and asked him what he thought of socialism. Robeson himself says, "I hadn't anything to say. I'd never really thought about socialism." Five years later Robeson made his first trip to the Soviet Union, the great impression it made upon him is well known and his subsequent visits to the Soviet Union were milestones in his political development. But it was through his interest in Russian culture and Soviet culture that Robeson came to understand the political problems and the place of art in the struggle for a better society, socialism. His understanding of the role of culture in society and culture in history stems from his studies of Russian and Soviet culture in the thirties.

He came to understand that it was not sufficient to educate his audiences to appreciate culture in itself but to educate them to struggle, to show them the real revolutionary character of art. Art as a weapon to liberate mankind. Robeson never made the mistake of applying his thesis in a narrow sectarian manner, which some of his contemporaries did in Britain. He understood the power of true art to inspire the people for their struggle. Robeson's concerts are evidence of how well Robeson understood this. Particularly in his later years he often introduced his songs explaining them to the audience. Here again he understood the growing influence of admass, the lack of cultural education and the need to find ways of helping the audience to understand his message, to show them real culture not the ersatz rubbish which late bourgeois culture produced. Robeson never ceased to defend the Soviet Union against attack, regardless of the cost. The writer of the programme notes to his 1960 tour quotes Robeson: "'Here' (in the SU), remarked Robeson to Eisenstein before he left, 'I am not a Negro but a human being'. It was a feeling which Robeson was never to forget or deny, no matter what the cost."

Robeson educated his audiences to struggle for the liberation of mankind. He sang the great Soviet "Song of the Fatherland" with its fine opening lines: "Soviet land so dear to every toiler" at many of his concerts. The significance of his approach to culture from the revolutionary standpoint is much greater than this short contribution can show. His greatest contribution was to educate his audiences in proletarian internationalism to honour and defend the SU.

It is not an accident, therefore, that we should honour Robeson, one of the great pioneers in the struggle for working class culture, not only in Britain but internationally.

III. SOLIDARITY – POWER OF THE WORKING CLASS

Interview with Paul Robeson in Spain 1938
By NICOLÁS GUILLÉN
First published in "Mediodia", Cuba, 1938

At the side of democracy in Spain, and on every front of struggle for its triumph, there are men of the most diverse races, from the most diverse places in the world. Silent Chinese who fire their rifles at Italians and Germans, confident that it is the same as their fight against the Japanese who profane Nanking; sad Hindus who traded the dirty banks of the Ganges for the narrow waters of the Jarama; Blacks born in the Yankee south, in Cuba, in Jamaica, in Brazil ... Who sends them? No one; they are true volunteers in contrast to those who pack the cold ambition of Mussolini in sad bundles, to hurl them on a land that they in fact do not hate, and in which they are forced to oppose people who have done nothing to them. These come knowing what cause they defend, what enemy they have to exterminate. They ask only a place in combat, a definite, efficient task; here, they make themselves useful with selfless simplicity, loading a machine gun, doing guard duty on a battlement, buried for months on end, at the service of science, in a hospital. Each according to his own possibilities, each adjusting his aid to the measure of his own skills. Langston Hughes, the great poet of Mulatto, lived long days in Madrid and visited the front to bring to men of his race and his land the simple popular verse that flows from the blues and from spirituals; Cueria, from Havana, son of a Black and an Asturian, commands a company of machine gunners in the Central Front; Paul Robeson, the wonderful American singer, child of slaves, rushes from London to enter Spanish soil with a smile of hope. Paul Robeson? And what is Paul Robeson doing in Spain? What; wait; he himself is about to tell us.

When I arrive at the hotel Majestic, where he is staying, I find the famous cinema artist blockaded by a crowd of people hanging on his most insignificant gestures. Robeson pays attention to everyone, smiling. He poses repeatedly for photographers, answers the most diverse questions without tiring. While the people pursue him, I watch. He is an enormous Black, who towers loftily above the group around him. How old is this man? His kinky hair is beginning to lighten a little in the center of his head, and next to his temples it is firmly whitening. Forty years old? Forty-five? He must be about that ... Nonetheless, his formidable physical development, the expression of happiness that always plays across his face, the deep brilliance of his eyes, all considerably discount the singer's accounting of years. When he talks, he talks passionately, his enormous hands contracted and turned palms up, an invariable gesture of his when talking. He dresses without luxury, rather one could say with great simplicity: a dark grey suit, not very new, a cap whose long use shows clearly, shoes that have walked about long enough to have forgotten the day they first stepped on the ground ... But everything in very good taste, with a great deal of care and balance. His solid personality projects great attractiveness and his body moves with the elasticity of an athlete, that makes one remember his career as a football player so long ago. I catch bits of his discussion, in which one word, "Spain," is repeated frequently; and while he talks, I look at his wife, a spirit of great purity and perception, who has published a book about her husband, attending to the visitors in the room with a pleasant smile. It is she who finally says to me:

"Paul is waiting for you ..."

The contact is made without formalities, in the manner of a reporter.

"I would like you to tell me yourself," I say to him. "What reasons led you to come to Spain."

"My devotion to democracy," he answers rapidly. "As an artist, I know that it is dishonorable to put yourself on a plane above the masses, without marching at their side, participating in their anxieties and sorrows, since we artists owe everything to the masses, from our formation to our well-being; and it is not only as an artist that I love the cause of democracy in Spain, but also as a Black. I belong to an oppressed race, discriminated against, one that could not live if fascism triumphed in the world. My father was a slave, and I do not want my children to become slaves ... During these last months I have worked a great deal in London, singing to raise funds to send to the Spanish people, and I will continue doing it, not only there, but everywhere that I am able to do it."

"I know that you have just come from Madrid," I say. "What is your impression of what you have seen in this city and in the rest of democratic Spain?"

"It made a great impression on me. I have never seen a more courageous people, one more energetically working for victory. I confess that I feel happy to have been able to come to Spain and above all to Madrid. The people there talk to you, and everyone gives you their warmth, their simplicity, their generosity. The day I arrived, they called me "Pablo;" two days later, they were calling me "Pablito." Imagine, me Pablito, with my height! Besides, no one there ever thinks of defeat. In spite of the destruction inflicted on the city by the howitzers on the fascists, in spite of the danger of the daily bombings, in spite of the hardships that people are suffering, no one protests or complains. It's war. Everyone gives all his strength to resist and to win. No; there is no fear there ... On one of the last afternoons, on the eve of my departure, I peacefully played a game of football with a group of boys in a site all too close to a zone of the city that was under artillery bombardment at that moment."

Robeson smiles, and is silent for a minute.

"The Madrilenos are also very generous," he continued. "Shortly after I arrived, I gave a package of cigarettes to a Spanish captain, because I knew about the shortage of tobacco there. A few moments later I went with him to visit a hospital, where I sang, and I was delighted to see that man distributing his cigarettes among his comrades, without leaving anything for himself. And they do the same thing with everything else ..."

"That's true," I say. "I have never seen a Spaniard wrangle about having a little more or less of material things, in contrast to what happens in other areas, where at times they have a fame that is in fact exaggerated. In many stores, when there is no change for the money that we have, they return it to us with the merchandise, saying, 'It doesn't matter, bring me the money another time: that little bit won't make us either richer or poorer ...' I remember one day, walking with Langston Hughes through the streets of Madrid, when the poet's shoe broke. The sole had come loose, and it prevented him from walking. We went into a small shoe-repair shop, where an old man was bent over working on repair a man's boot. He left it; Langston showed him

what he wanted; he scrupulously examined the shoe, and in less than ten minutes, he sewed it and nailed it together, leaving it in perfect condition. When we asked him what it cost, the man answered, almost angrily, 'Cost, you say? Go on, senor: ask and nothing more!' Yes, Mr. Robeson, you're right; they are very generous ..."

The conversation moves on, from there, to film and theater.

"Some years ago," says Robeson, "the Black was a comic personage in North American theater. When Emperor Jones, the work of O'Neill, was brought to the stage by another Black actor, I saw the possibilities that a Black had in dramatic art. For that reason, I wanted to portray that character, first on the stage and then on film. I must tell you that for me this was only a point of departure, a means to do more basic and important things, since it was necessary in a country like mine to demonstrate first that a man of color had artistic sensibility, and could walk the stage or pose before a movie camera with the same presence as the whites, and sometimes with greater presence. That is why I later portrayed Othello, and I am now preparing to do King Lear. However, today I am convinced that the great American and English companies are controlled by big capital, especially by the Steel trust, and they will never let me do a picture as I want. For that reason, I am not interested right now in film work, and less in pictures dealing with the 'Negro problem.' The big producers insist on presenting a caricature image of the Black, a ridiculous image, that amuses the white bourgeoisie, and I am not interested in playing their game ..."

"So," I say, "your cinematographic work up to now does not satisfy you ..."

"I never even saw those pictures after I made them," he answers.

"Then you are going to abandon films?" I ask him.

"No, not that. What I won't do any more is work for the big companies, which are headed by individuals who would make me a slave, like my father, if they could. I need to work with small independent producers, in short films with songs, until the moment comes to make something with greater breadth and a more positive meaning than has been possible so far. I would like to make a film on the life of a Black commander of the Lincoln Battalion in the International Brigades, who dies there; but this would be refused by the big Yankee movie companies ... However, I hope to get my wish, and bring to the screen the heroic atmosphere that I have breathed in Spain, and the great participation of men of my race in this struggle."

Robeson then talks to me enthusiastically about Spanish music.

"I have been surprised and delighted by the similarity between Black music and some Spanish music. The Flamencan song is Black in its rhythm and its sad depths. In Madrid, during a concert, I asked them to play Flamencan music; the artists very courteously did so, and then I could sing a Black song without the musicians having to change the rhythm with which they had accompanied the cante jondo in the least. Because of that, I want to return to Spain when there is more calm, when we have won the war, to gather and study many songs of this kind."

"Do you know Cuban music?" I ask. "The Black contribution to that music is also enormously rich, just as it is in the case of the rest of the Antilles and in Brazil."

"Yes, I know it, and I like it enormously. In fact, I am also thinking of going to Cuba, to study its musical folklore, which I know has the characteristics you describe. I think it would be enormously useful for my next films ..."

Robeson begins to get restless, because he has to leave immediately, he tells me, for London, where he lives. From there he will return to Paris, in order to sing in a meeting for the support of Spain, in La Mutualite. I understand that the interview has ended. He offers his enormous right hand, while he smiles. I say:

"It would be very good if you came to Cuba soon. There are many surprising things to learn there as well ..."

ROBESON Calls for Aid to Negroes Defending Democracy in Spain published in "The Negro Worker", June 1937

With a donation of two hundred and fifty dollars to Dr. Arnold Donawa in Paris, Paul Robeson, the famous Negro film star, actor and singer, initiated a fund for the relief of the dependents of American Negroes fighting in defence of democracy in Spain. Mr. Robeson has commented on the unprecedented example and inspiration which is being set up by the Soviet people in their aid to the Spanish Republic. This is possible he felt because these who live and develop under the classless socialist democracy can more clearly see the infinitely superiority that capitalist democracy, limited as it is, has over fascism. His own treatment in the capitalist countries and the jim-crowism and segregation suffered by his people particularly in democratic America were for him sufficient proof of the limitations of the capitalist freedom and justice.

Robeson said as he made the donation: "The freedom of all the peoples of the world is at stake in this conflict in Spain. These men who have gone to Spain have done and are doing their part. Surely we must do ours.

"I believe that there are literally hundreds of Negroes in the theatre and musical life who understand what a hunger, equality for and love of mankind impelled me to take this step."

The Crusade to End Lynching Speech by PAUL ROBESON over Mutual Broadcasting System, Washington, D. C. September 23, 1946

I stand here ashamed. Ashamed that here in the Capital of the world's first genuine democratic government, it is necessary to seek redress of a wrong that defies the most fundamental concept of that precious thing we call democracy. Ashamed that it is necessary in the year 1946 - 84 years after Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, it is necessary to rekindle the democratic spirit that brought that document into being. Ashamed that it is necessary, to publicly expose and fight the horrible contradiction that renders hollow our promises to lend the people of the world to their highest aspirations of freedom. I speak of the wave of lynch terror, and mob assault against Afro-Americans.

But I am not ashamed to stand here as a servant of my people, as a citizen of America, to defend and fight for the dignity and democratic rights of Afro-Americans - to fight for their right to live. And I am not ashamed to join with the thousands of Americans today here, from all over the land, white and black, Catholic, Jewish, Protestant, of all political persuasions, who have come together in this national pilgrimage of the American Crusade to End Lynching. People of America, we appeal to you to help wipe out this inhuman bestiality, this Ku Klux Klan hooded violence, this Fascism, as we have today appealed to the President and the Attorney-General of the United States.

For one wnole year, this lynch terror has been going on. The number of victims has increased in volume with each succeeding month. And, during this one year, there has not been one arrest, there has not been one indictment, there has not been one conviction. These facts would lead to the conclusion that our local, state and national law enforcing agencies are either impotent or indifferent. We can be sure that the advocates of lynching have made this interpretation, as their increased violence attests. But, I know - and you know - that the American people are certainly not indifferent and certainly do not recognize any such thing as impotence on the part of their government when the fundamental rights of all are actually threatened. And lynching is undermining the fundamental democracy of all. It is not the special or exclusive concern of Negro Americans. The good Aryan who stood idly by when the German Jew was persecuted, lived to learn that that was the beginning of the end of his own freedom. Let us not some day live to learn that the persecution of the Negro was the beginning of the end of all American freedom.

Democracy is the birthright of all American Negro. The defense of that birthright is the defense of every American's right to join a trade union, to practice any faith of his choice, to join any club, or fraternal organization, to exercise his voting franchise, to enjoy the privileges of the Bill of Rights and the United States Constitution. We who are gathered here in Washington today in the American Crusade to End Lynching are representatives of all sections of American organizations and ideas. Assembled here are citizens from churches, organized labor, veteran, fraternal, youth, civic and women's organizations. We have met in the common determination that those who kill by lynching shall die by the law, that our Congress shall inact federal anti-lynch legislation and that our national legislative halls shall not be dishonored by seating of a representative of the Ku Klux Klan who is elected by less than 10 % of the people of this state.

Just as on this day - September 22 - 84 years ago Lincoln gave notice to the Southern Bourbons that 100 days later slavery would be officially abolished, so we today give notice to the present day lynch enemies of our nation that a 100 day campaign has been instituted to end their rule of rape and foggot. We call upon the American people to petition and demand in the next 10 days of their federal government that proper action be taken to achieve this. From this day to January first, all America must be alerted and mobilized. United, let us go forward together for a genuine democracy for all people of those United States -- a democratic, abundant and full life for all citizens of all races, creeds, and color.

"Digging in for the Winter", Say Striking Longshoremen published in "ILWU Dispatcher" +, San Francisco, October 18, 1946

+ (International Longshoremen and Warehousemen Union)

Five thousand workers left the picket lines to came to that mass meeting with Paul Robeson. They stood in the hot sun. Suddenly through the crowd a giant figure of man could be seen heading toward the truck which served as platform. A murmur of applause and cheers followed him as the men made way.

"Hi, big boy", someone called out.

Paul Robeson waved and grinned hello.

"He always looks a little bigger each time I see him", a seaman murmured, "he is what I call a big man."

Robeson mounted the truck. He stood bareheaded flanked by an American flag blowing in the hot wind as five thousand men thundered their welcome.

"I'm mighty proud to be here", Robeson said. "This last year I've been on picket lines all over the country. And on those lines I've seen Negro and white together united for the things all men want: equal rights for all. And when I was overseas I saw the workers there. They are with us. All over the world we are on the march. What you are doing here today on the waterfront will help to determine what happens of over the world to workers everywhere. They are your allies and you are theirs. And there are some people's government over there that are with us, too. We are not allone."

"I met an old friend on the waterfront today", Robeson said. "A boy I knew in Spain. He asked if I'd sing Joe Hill at the meeting today. I'd like to sing it".

Five thousand workers stood silent in the hot sun as the great rich baritone flooded the Embarcadero with the song of a murdered worker. Windows in the nearby hotels opened and guests peered out. Men walked out of restaurants and bars and listened quietly to the song.

"I dreamed I saw Joe Hill last night
Alive as you and me.
Says I but Joe you're ten years dead,
I never died, says he.

The copper bosses killed you, Joe,
They shot you, Joe, says I.
Takes more than guns to kill a man,
Says Joe, I didn't die.

From San Diego up to Maine,
In every mine and mill,
Where working men are out of strike
It's there you'll find Joe Hill.

And standing there as big as life
And smiling with his eyes.
Says Joe: What they can never kill
Went on to organize.
Went on to organize."

As Robeson sustained the last long note a slow smile spread and remained fixed for serveral seconds on the faces of his listeners.
Then the applause thundered.
"He is a big man!" somebody said.

From Proceedings of the International Fur - and Leather Workers Convention, May 1948 PAUL ROBESON'S Speech

President Ben Gold: "And now another treat. I shall introduce to you a really great American, an American whose friendship our Union holds very, very dear.

I want to make a confession to you, Delegates. Every time I have the privilege to be in the company of this great man, I am overwhelmed with conflicting emotions. I feel guilty and ashamed. I feel as guilty as though I would carry part of the responsibility for the sufferings of his people. I feel ashamed that in our great country such crimes should be permissible, that 14 million men and women be subjected to a deliberate policy of segregation, discrimination and persecution as though they were not human beings.

But at the same time, conscious of his presence I am imbued with that spirit of confidence and courage

and pride that in our country we have such a great, active champion fighter for liberty and freedom and well-being of all the people.

I am happy to say that he is one of those, not too many, unfortunately, that dedicates his entire life for the struggle of the common man, devotes his energy, his great talents to the struggle of the American people for their human rights against oppression, against the poisonous prejudices that are undermining our great democracy.

I am informed that in the past year he gave up everything else and devotes his complete talent to but one thing, going from town to town, city to city, talking to people, appealing to them, encouraging them, helping them unite and organize to maintain, preserve and broaden out the democratic rights in our country for the benefit of the people.

Delegates, it is an honor, a privilege and a real pleasure to present to you the man that rightfully earns the admiration, respect, devotion and love of millions and millions of Americans - Paul Robeson."

(Prolonged applause, cheers, delegates arose)

Paul Robeson: "I am sure that I need not say that I thank you and that I am especially proud to be here today.

I have been wandering back and forth across this America of ours trying to help where I can. I got a telegram from Ben saying I would have to be here and as a member of the Union, here I am. Just a few things I am going to say. They have to do with things that I think are very close to you and to me. Before that I am going to sing a couple of songs, unaccompanied. I used to do that, too!

(Mr. Robeson sang "Water Boy", "Joe Hill.")

As you know, I have given up the last year or so of my professional career to go about in many parts of America and I have seen many things.

I have been, for example, in North Carolina where I stood on the very soil on which my own father was a slave. I know this part of the world very well. My father was a wandering minister, going from one small church to another, and I saw my cousins in North Carolina, sharecroppers, tenant farmers, trying to eke some kind of decent living from that land.

I was in the mountains of West Virginia a few weeks ago, just a couple of weeks ago, and the things that I saw shocked me beyond words. I did not know that we, the wealthy land that we are, we with our high standard of living could allow thousands and thousands of workers to live like that.

I was in Pueblo, Colorado not long ago, with Mr. Pressman, your attorney, and the next morning we saw Spanish-Americans living practically under the ground in holes - in Pueblo, Colorado. In the South, in the cotton fields, across the whole South, in the fruitful fields of California, people from the Middle West of our country, practically living at the edge of subsistence. Now why these things? These things should make us reflect upon the kind of America that we have. Why should this be so?

The late President Roosevelt said that it was one third of our nation that was under-privileged. As I go about seeing things at their source, it seems it is possibly more than two thirds, perhaps more than that, while the few control the great wealth and in some way convince us that we have this very high standard of life.

I see too much poverty for us to boast.

Now as I was in Kansas City and saw what the police did - I was in the hall a few days after the police had hit the workers over the heads, gone in and torn up the union hall. I remember when on the Mesabi Range, I had a concert there, I was on the picket line, and the scabs came out protected by the sheriff, and they were bent over. I wanted to know why they were bent over and they told me they had rifles in their hands and they were supposed to shoot if necessary. They did shoot just the other night, yesterday, I understand, at Waterloo, Iowa, I just came from there, too, speaking in the home state of Mr. Henry Wallace. Things happened in Charleston, South Carolina just the other day.

These things mean there are forces in our life, forces of the few that are saying to the people as they aspire to a more decent life not only shall we not give you more wages, not only shall you Negroes not have any more civil rights, we will beat you down and see that you remain in a kind of industrial serfdom as long as we have any kind of power.

These things, unfortunately, are not new in the struggle of mankind. I often think how is it that we, the people, the great majority of the people, struggling as we have for generation after generation forward to some better life, how can it happen that everywhere in history a few seem to take the power in their hands, confuse the people themselves and there they remain? But that has been the history of the world or we might not be here because who built this America of ours? The poor from England, the poor from Ireland, the poor from Scotland and Wales, my own people brought as slaves to this land, those who suffered in the old Poland, those who suffered in Czarist Russia, those who suffered in the Balkans, in Asia, in Latin-America - we have built this America. This has been built upon the very backs of ourselves and of our forefathers.

And the Negro people of this land must realize today, as they face a new kind of struggle, that they must have courage; they must have knowledge that the very primary wealth of America is cotton, built upon the backs of our fathers; that cotton taken to the textile mills of New England; and that we don't have to ask for crumbs to be dropped from the few up top, but we have the right and the responsibility to demand in a militant way a better life for ourselves and for the rest of those Americans and the peoples of the world who still suffer and are oppressed.

Now, this is the essence of the struggle that we fought under Roosevelt. No one knows it better than your Union. I have gone about this land in many places and everywhere do I see the Fur and Leather Workers in the vanguard of progress.

I was in Cincinnati not long ago, in a real struggle I was in the house of Mr. Dickerson and there the whole core of progressive struggle was built around our Union. So I know that we understand that somewhere things do get confused now and then. The boys on top are pretty good at sowing the seeds of confusion, but it is very simple if we remember our own struggle, how you have grown and how you have built. And somewhere, we had this great figure of a Roosevelt who fought and called these people what they were, the people who control our resources, the Economic Royalists, he called them. This struggle went on, in our favor and in the favor of the Negro workers and the Negro people throughout this land. And somewhere other forces came in and have tried to undo all the great work that he built up.

But it does not rest in big words; it rests in very simple things. It rests in the fact as to whether we sitting here, getting along pretty well, whether other Americans doing very well, consider those who yet do not have a decent life. Are they really people like ourselves?

This is the way I have tried to phrase it in the last weeks because as I said to the people in Colorado, those of the progressive movement - how could they sit there and allow people to live like these people did in Pueblo?

How can we dare face the world today knowing the suffering in many parts of the world and stand and, for example, support and allow our government to support a British Empire which supports a Smuts in South Africa, which has millions of Africans and peoples from Asia in complete serfdom?

How can we stand and allow our government to suggest that we can think more of the profits of a few people of Standard Oil of this very state, than of the

lives of one of the great peoples of the world, a people who gave us the very basis of our ethics and our richness? I know a lot of these fellows on the board of Standard Oil - they say, "Roby, why do you take the side you do?" They care nothing for the rights of the ordinary laboring man. Let them starve, they say, just so we get the profits. But I say to them, never, for example, shall my son go to a foreign land to take up a gun to shoot a people that are close to him in the interests of any kind of oil.

So this is the basic thing, as I see it. Just people, millions and millions of them, aspiring people, very much the same all over the world. And if we understand that obviously nothing is perfect in this world, our struggle in America from the days of Jefferson down through Lincoln and Roosevelt and through Henry Wallace today has been somehow to see that the people can take some kind of real share of their labor, that the few shall not keep on controlling our land, that there must be an extension of this democracy to those who do not have it. And so this is so all over the world! ..."

"I shall finish with this reading of FREEDOM TRAIN by Langston Hughes

I read in the papers about the
Freedom Train
I heard on the radio about the
Freedom Train
I seen folks talking about the
Freedom Train.
Lord, I've been a-waitin' for the
Freedom Train!
Way down in Dixie the only train I see's
Got a Jim-Crow car set aside for me.
I hope there ain't no Jim-Crow on the
Freedom Train,
No backdoor entrance to the Freedom Train,
No sign FOR COLORED in the Freedom Train,
No WHITE FOLKS ONLY on the Freedom Train,
Well, I'm goin' to check up on this
FREEDOM TRAIN.
Who is the engineer on the Freedom Train?
Can a coal-black man drive the Freedom Train?
Or am I still a porter on the Freedom Train?
Is there ballot boxes on the Freedom Train?
Do colored folks vote on the Freedom Train?
When it stops in Mississippi, will it be made plain
Everybody's got a right to board the
Freedom Train?
Somebody tell me about this
Freedom Train.
The Birmingham Station's marked
COLORED and WHITE.
The white folks go left
The colored go right.
They even got a segregated lane.
Is that the way to get aboard the
Freedom Train?
I've got to know about this
Freedom Train!
If my children ask me, "Daddy, please explain
Why there's a Jim-Crow station for the
Freedom Train?"
What shall I tell my children?
You tell me because freedom ain't freedom
When a man ain't free.

Her grandson's name was Jimmy, he died at Anzio
He died for real. It was no show.
Is it for real or a show again
The freedom that they carry on this
Freedom Train?
Jimmy wants to know about this
Freedom train.
I'm going to check up!"

President Gold: Paul is tired and I think you would want Paul's voice to remain fresh and powerful for many, many years to come. (Applause)

Why is it, Delegates, that these fellows that have the banks and the railroads and the oil wells and everything, why can't they buy off men like Paul? They've got everything. Why can't they buy these man?

Voices: Not for sale!

Voices: Can they buy you?

Delegates: For the same reason they can't buy you, Brother Gold. (Applause)

President Gold: When we have Paul Robeson and others like him, we are richer than they are. (Applause) And when our country can produce a Paul Robeson, it is still a big, great country that will overcome all the obstacles and difficulties. (Applause)

I know that years ago when we began to fight in the trade unions for the program to organize the unorganized, to open the door for the Negro people, equality in the unions, we were told they are a bunch of dreamers, some day of course, generations later, a hundred or two hundred years later - in principle, they agree - but they expelled us for that.

Look, Paul -

Mr. Robeson: I am looking.

President Gold: I am so confident that this struggle for equality of the Negro people, which will mean also great freedom for the white people, is not a question of a hundred years later. Paul Robeson will still sing at that great celebration when we will win that great victory. (Applause) That would be something. It could be done.

Paul, I have no words to express my appreciation for your great work, for the inspiration and encouragement that you bring to us and to the hundreds of thousands and millions of workers. Is there a motion by the Convention to express thanks to Paul Robeson?

DELEGATE POTASH: Can we make Paul a double honorary member of our Union?

President Gold: He is. Who moves? ... (Many voices) ...

The whole Convention! All in favor of that motion to publish the speech, make it a part of the minutes, publish it in the FUR AND LEATHER WORKER, and everyone of you to sing like Paul, the songs he sang. "He would not be able to get a concert because he fights for labor!" You demonstrated already what you can do when you get into that fight. That would be some kind of a fight! They would feel sorry.

All in favor of the motion made and seconded by the entire Convention, signify by saying "Aye"; opposed.

Paul, you will agree with me that the motion was carried. (Applause)

(Presents pen and pencil gift.)

He says he can use one pen.

I usually don't do it, I don't do it because sometimes I am afraid. A president of the union has to behave differently.

But this time - three cheers for Paul.

... (The Convention cheered Paul Robeson) ... (shortened)

Statement at a Press Conference of the Council on African Affairs By PAUL ROBESON New York, July 20, 1949

Quite clearly America faces a crisis in race relations. The Un-American Activities Committee moves now to transform the Government's cold war policy against the Negro people into a hot war. Its action incite the

Ku Klux Klan, that openly terrorist organisation, to a reign of mob violence against my people in Florida and elsewhere. This Committee attempts to divide the Negro people one from another in order to prevent us from winning jobs, security and justice under the banner of peace.

The loyalty of the Negro people is not a subject for debate. I challenge the loyalty of the Un-American Activities Committee. This committee maintains an ominous silence in the face of the lynchings of Maceo Snipes, Robert Mallard, the two Negro veterans and their wives in Monroe, Georgia, and the violent and unpunished murders of scores of Negro veterans by white supremacists since V-J Day. It is not moved to investigate the attempted legal lynchings of Mrs. Rosa Lee Ingram, Negro mother of 12 living children and her two sons, now jailed for life in Georgia for protecting her honor; or of the Trenton Six, or the Martinsville Seven, or the denial of simple justice to our people in the every day life of the nation's capitol. Every pro-war fascist-minded group in the country regards the Committee's silence as license to proceed against my people, unchecked by Government authorities and unchallenged by the courts.

Our fight for peace in America is a fight for human dignity, and an end to ghetto life. It is the fight for the constitutional liberties, the civil and human rights of every American. This struggle is the decisive struggle with which my people are today concerned. This fight is of vital concern to all progressive Americans, white as well as Negro. For victory in this struggle, Americans need peace, not war on foreign fields.

No country in the world threatens the peace and safety of our great land. It is not the Soviet Union that threatens the life, liberty and the property and citizenship rights of Negro Americans. The threat comes from within. To destroy this threat our people need the aid of every honest American, Communist and non-Communist alike. Those who menace our lives proceed unchallenged by the Un-American Activities Committee. I shall not be drawn into any conflict dividing me from my brother victim of this terror. I am wholly committed to the struggle for peace and democratic rights of free Americans.

PAUL ROBESON: My Answer As Told to Dan Burley published in "New York Age", September 1949

(Editor's Note: The views expressed in this and subsequent articles are these of Mr. Robeson and do not neccesarity reflect in any manner or interpretation the aims and policies of "The New York Age". Space granted Mr. Robeson is for the purpose of public service and fair play.)

I'm in the headlines and they're saying all manner of things about me such as "enemy" of the land of my birth, "traitor" to my country, "dangerous radical" and that I am an "ungrateful" cur. But they can't say that I am not 100 per cent for my people. The American Press has set out on its own campaign of deliberate misquotation and distortion of the things I say and do trying to set my people against me but they can't win because what I say is the unadulterated truth which cannot be denied.

Everybody is trying to explain Paul Robeson. That isn't hard. I'm just an ordinary guy like anyone else, trying to do what I can to make things match, to find and tie up the loose ends. I am asked, do I think the salvation of the American Negro lies in complete integration - social, political and economic, or in a highly developed Negro nationalism. Let me answer it in my way.

The whole Negro problem has its basis in the South - in the cotton belt where Negroes are in the majority. That is the only thing that explains me completely. The Negro upper class wants to know why I am out here struggling in behalf of the oppressed, exploited Negro of the South when I could isolate myself from them like they do and become wealthy by keeping quiet on such disturbing subjects. This, I have found, would not be true of me. What I earn doesn't help my people that much. I found I have to think of the whole background of the Negro problem. Therefore I have taken my obligations to the Negro people very seriously.

I have asked myself just what Negro people am I fighting for. The big Negroes take it that I am fighting for them and since they're comfortable and living good, they don't want too much fighting or things said that might prove embarrassing to their positions. My travels abroad, however, have shown me what and whom I am fighting for. During my travels, I met native Africans, West Indians, Chinese, East Indians and other dark people who are fighting for the same thing - freedom from bondage of the imperialistic Wall Street, the bankers and the plantation bosses, whether in London or in New York. The big Negro wants somebody to fight for him, but his objectives are purely selfish.

Let's return again to the fact that the whole Negro problem has its basis in the South. Do you know that out of 15,000,000 Negroes in the United States, nearly 10 millions live and die in the South? I've got to be interested in basic problems, the people and conditions on the lower levels of life. I found that Negroes constitute 98 per cent of the population of the West Indies. Without the Negro there could be no economic South and there could be no economic West Indies to make the bankers and overlords of Wall Street fabulously wealthy. In the South, Negroes do most of the work and get nothing from it in return.

It is very easy to see, as in the question of India, China, Africa and the West Indies, the future of these people in the independence of their own countries. I see the Negro's struggle as demanding great concentration on the question as to where he is going and who is leading him there. We must come together as a people, unite and close ranks and with our own unity we must try and find the right allies - those whose struggles are identical to our own. We cannot escape the fact that our struggles over the last 300 years have driven us together.

Suppose that in the South, where Negroes are in the majority in the agricultural belt, we had the vote like everyone else? What would happen? Wouldn't Negroes be in Congress, be governors, judges, mayors, sheriffs and so on? Wouldn't they be in control in the South and run things as the minority people down there are doing at this very moment?

There you have your answer to that charge that I am fomenting strife and plotting with a foreign government to establish a Black Republic in the South. What would happen if the Negro was allowed to vote? Without any nonsense, you would have a tremendous concentration of Negro power. Many people would object and oppose it on various grounds, principally racial and economic, but you have a concentration of Irish power in Boston, Italian power in New York, and so on. Nobody has made a major issue of that, have they? What is wrong with our struggle for our right to vote, for economic liberation, for civil rights?

There are two groups of people who are worried stiff about the growth of the unified power of the Negro people: one group includes the Dixiecrats. The other includes the reactionary industrialists and financiers who own many of the farms and plantations. In the South on which my people and your people are enslaved right now. These are the people who work to keep the Negro in bondage.

My basic point is that these are the fellows who want the Negro to be loyal to them, to die for them in war, to make a profit for them.

We Negroes must think this thing out. What America are we fighting for? Obviously we don't live alone in America, so we must choose the right allies, and those allies cannot be those Dixiecrats. They cannot be those bankers and international financiers who run most of the country and own today all the resources of the South built on the labor of the Negro people.

Our allies must be the progressive section of the American people - the honestly progressives who find kinship in the common struggle for freedom, equality and unity. And who are these progressives? They are those who swell the ranks of labor, the poor white sharecropper of the South, presently being used as a tool by the rich plantation owners and bankers to pull their chestnuts out of the fire by warring on their Negro neighbors; the small business man and others of all races, colors, creeds and national origins, including the small, independent farmer - people who are passed up when the profits are handed out but who are the first thrown into the pot to cook up those profits for someone else. The Dixiecrats and those powerful reactionaries who hope to stamp out the militant struggle of the Negro for complete freedom, equality and civil rights, hope to keep all the wealth for themselves.

They are the ones who are behind the House Un-American Committee. They are the ones ceaselessly pushing the persecution of those unafraid to speak out and to champion the man down under, whether he be black or white.

When some of our leading Negroes select those most guilty of exploiting their people to get thick with in their social and economic affairs, they pick the wrong people, no matter what excuse might be presented. Leopards don't change their spots and neither do those who think about us adversely change their thoughts overnight. This sort of thing I'd call "20th Century Uncle Tommism" - going back to the Big House to fawn at the boss' feet - and we shouldn't tolerate it one minute if we expect to go ahead.

Me? I'm out with the field hand. That's the only way I can see it. They tell us to stay in our place. Well, I'm staying in mine - out here with the field hand - the little fellow, the guy who gets pushed around, the fellow who has to do all the hard work and gets nothing from it.

I'm talking about the sharecroppers, Negro and white, on the sprawling plantations in the South.

I'm talking about the tobacco, steel and lumber workers; the men who tote the sandbags with chains about their legs to stem the Mississippi at flood time so as to save the empire of some guy in New York, London or Paris who has never seen the land which keeps him in luxury nor met and talked with the people on whose backs his kingdom rests.

Yes, that's the only way I can see it - stay with, work with, fight with and sing with the field hand, and if we stick it out long enough - we'll get the Big House!

We must solve our problem where we find it. Not by going thousands of miles away to take up something we are not familiar with.

Why should we leave the United States without first getting what is coming to us through a militant struggle to gain the profits that have come from our labor, our blood, our sweat, our tears? I'm talking now about the various schemes that would arouse false hopes in the Negro people about taking some other land as a homeland when we already have our home right here on American soil which will be ours when we make it our own.

Think what a Federation of the West Indies would mean economically. With Negroes 98 per cent of the West Indian population, why shouldn't they control the sugar, tourist trade, the banana and rum industries and the possibilities of further industrial development of the islands?

A Federation would give Negroes a completely integrated economy that would make the West Indies one of the most important places of the world - connected with the Middle and South American mainland. Think of the strategic position a native West Indian-controlled political and economic federation would command. Think of the weight such a setup would throw in United Nations circles!

As chairman of the Council on African Affairs, I can truthfully say that the African people are highly cultured and not savage and cannibalistic as the newspapers, radio, book and lecture propagandists would make them. That is the Dixiecrat program to keep us fighting one another and to lead us away from the true paths that lead to the doorway to freedom from which we have been detoured over the centuries. I am proud of my African heritage. I expect to be in Nigeria and French West Africa next year. There is a tremendous liberation movement now underway in Nigeria of which Azikiwe is the brilliant, capable and resourceful leader. It is very possible that Nigeria will be the first African nation to win complete liberation. Understand that we over here, whether from the West Indies or from New York, should consult with the Africans about taking something from them. This is in answer to the question: What Do You Think of the Back-to-Africa movement?

The Paris Peace Conference brought all the reactionaries of America down on my neck.

Where will the next PEEKSKILL be? What now battle ground have the reactionary police and those behind them selected? Where will they demonstrate further the "old Southern Custom" of beating in the heads of Negroes and all those identified with the struggle to free the Negro people? To be completely free from the chains that bind him, the Negro must be part of the progressive forces which are fighting the overall battle of the little guy - the sharecropper, the drugstore clerk, the auto mechanic, the porter and the maid, the owner of the corner diner, the truck driver, the garment, mill and steel workers. The progressive section sees no color line and views the whole problem of race discrimination as a divisional tactic of those busy pitting class against class, dividing the masses into tiny, warring factions that produces nothing for them but discord and misery while a scant, privileged few takes all the wealth, holds the power and dictates the terms. This concentration of power in the hands of less than a hundred men is so strong that it can decide who shall eat and who shall not, who shall have decent homes and who shall be doomed to crowded tenements that are firetraps and rat-infested holes where children must be reared and the occupants live and die in despair.

I speak of those bereft of uncompromising, courageous leadership that cannot be bought, cannot be intimidated, and cannot be swerved from its purpose of bringing true freedom to those who follow it. God gave me the voice that people want to hear, whether in song or in speech. I shall take my voice wherever there are those who want to hear the melody of freedom or the words that might inspire hope and courage in the face of despair and fear.

I told that I have been to Memphis, Tennessee, the stamping grounds of the biggest Negro-haters and I have been to the lynch belt of Florida. I told I would return to Peekskill. I did. I will go North, South, East or West, Europe, Africa, South America, Asia or Australia and fight for the freedom of the people. This thing burns in me and it is not my nature nor inclination to be scared off.

They revile me, scandalize me, and try to boller me down on all sides. That's all right. It's okay. Let them continue. My voice topped the blare of the Legion bands and the hoots of the hired hoodlums who attempted to break up my concert appearance for the Harlem Division of the Civil Rights Congress. It will be heard above the screams of the intolerant, the jeers of the ignorant pawns of the small groups of the lousy rich who would

drown out the voice of a champion of the underdog. My weapons are peaceful for it is only by peace that peace can be attained. Their weapons are the nightsticks of the fascist police, the bloodhounds of the cracker sheriffs in the backwoods of the South, the trained voices of the choirs of hate. The song of freedom must prevail.

The Voice of America
By JUAN MARINELLO
published in "Daily Worker", September 1, 1950

The world will not be able to hear, for the moment, the prodigious voice of Paul Robeson. The State Departement of Washington has cancelled the passport of the great artist. It is the equivalent of prohibiting Robeson from leaving his country. As is customary, Nazi aggression is not explained to those who suffer it. Acheson and his assistants, so loquacious when it comes to inventing victories in Corea or caluminating the Soviet Union, have become dumb before the uproar of the democratic protests of the United States public.

In truth, the explanation for the monstrous act is to be found in the conscience of the thousands of men and women who have applauded in all the continents this extraordinary singer. As is known, Paul Robeson is a high example of revolutionary firmness, and his natural leadership had become already too dangerous for imperialism engaged in war.

Solely because of his prestige and his conduct, Robeson has constituted in these days a growing accusation against those who oppress his people, against those who unleash their zoological fury against the Negro people of the United States, against those who destroy in his country the last vestiges of the democratic liberties against the politics of war which today is assassinating children, women and the aged in heroic Corea.

Acheson and his group have not been able to resist the voice of Paul Robeson; a voice which has made a great human service of its unequaled excellence. It is often that those who possess a great natural gift put it at the service of those who pay them best; since it also assures one of a life free from assaults and dangers. Paul Robeson assumed since the days of his youth the great responsibility that his exceptional talents imposed on him, if he wanted to be true to his brothers of his race and to the primary conditions of an honest and free man.

When his fame broke the bounds of his country, Robeson offered his art to those who fought against injustice, to those who struggled with oppression, to those who hoped for an equalitarian, peaceful and noble life.

I have been a witness, through happy circumstances, of the love that the masses of the world have for Paul Robeson. I saw him at a great meeting in New York and have heard him in the hard and glorious days of besieged Madrid. I have applauded him at the Salle Pleyel in Paris at the World Congress of the Partisans of Peace. I have heard him in the beautiful Spanish rooms of the Jrasdanl Palace in Prague, when President Gottwald had brought together the fraternal delegates who had come to the Ninth Congress of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. I have heard him in the ruins of Warsaw and the avenues of Moscow.

When a voice comes to be thus the possession and hope of all the continents, the imperialists are greatly interested in silencing it. That is what the Truman government has attempted. Paul Robeson has come to be, by his singular valor and his political firmness, the great accuser of barbarism in force in his country and at the same time, a great friend of the Soviet Union, a great fighter for equality, for democracy, for peace.

Paul Robeson, THE VOICE OF AMERICA. And thus is also called, The Voice of America, the radio program of lies sent by Truman and Acheson. Two voices of America face to face. Suffice it to say what is evident: that of the Washington government is a usurpation; Robeson's profound reality. Let Paul Robeson feel in these moments the firm support of the Cuban people. Let him know that the voice of the people - which has nothing to do, as in his country, with official opinion - is one with his voice; let him know that there we live with the conviction that those who today condemn him to silence will shut up soon forever. Then Paul Robeson will sing with all the voice that he has.
(shortened)

Right!
By W. E. B. DUBOIS
published in "Negro Digest", March 1950

It was in Paris, on Wednesday, April 20, 1949. The Salle Pleyel was packed to the high, manybalconied ceiling with delegates from 60 countries representing practically all the world. Paul Robeson entered and the whole audience rose and cheered with 2500 voices and in all human tongues. I doubt if any other person on earth could have elicited such spontaneous tribute. It was a many-sided outburst to a magnificent voice; to a recent visitor in every country of Europe - England, Denmark, Sweden, the Soviet Union, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Austria, whence he had flown to Paris; to a son of black slaves, a coworker not with wealthy and titled snobs but with laborers of all climes and colors. We had men of stature and renown at that gathering: Joliot-Curie and Aragon, Nenni and Picasso, Bernal, Zilliacus and Fadeev; none of these received so tumultuous a tribute. The program was interrupted and Robeson ascended the podium. His great voice rose in song - song of black slaves, song of white slaves, songs of Russia and France. Then among the few words of a short speech, Robeson said: "The black folk of America will never fight against the Soviet Union!" The applause swept up to the skies.

That was what happened. What was Robeson in reality saying? He knew better than most men, because he had long experience in both the Soviet Union and the United States that of all countries, Russia alone has made race prejudice a crime; of all great imperialisms, Russia alone owns no colonies of dark serfs or white and what is more important has no investments in colonies and is lifting no blood-soaked profits from cheap labor in Asia and Africa. Robeson believed that facing the possibility of war with such a country, no black American of intelligence would for a moment take up arms.

It was the natural conclusion of a clear-headed, straight-thinking artist and idealist which Robeson has always been. Robeson was wrong but wrong not in his logic, much less in his lofty ideals; he was wrong only in having too great faith in human beings. What then he really was saying was: From my nature and beliefs, it is to me inconceivable that 15,000,000 descendants of Negro slaves who know from bitter and continuing experience what race prejudice and the enslavement of Africa and Asia has done not only to my people, but to civilization and Christianity and human decency for 500 years - it is inconceivable that these people would in any single case willingly join in war against the one great modern country which has opposed prejudice in a land once riddled by it, and the conquest and subjection of colonies in a world where colonial imperialism has murdered millions and which is suffering today in the eyes of Britain, France and America mainly for this stand.

Immediately this world of Robeson's, so dangerous to

those who make money out of war and get huge income out of the gold and diamonds of South Africa, the rubber of Indo-China and tin of Indonesia, was spoken, the bought press agencies lifted this out of all which this greatest of peace congresses was saying - and it was saving brave and indisputable things - and featured Paul Robeson's voice in America as treason; and treason in truth it was to all who want war at any price and who are more than willing to use "niggers" to gain their ends. Moreover, certain Negro leaders hastened to "beat the gun" in denouncing Robeson before they even knew with certainty what he said or meant.

Moreover the case is so clear; the arguments for peace so overwhelming; the lie of the threat of Russia and Communism so phony, that every effort is taken to stop the public from hearing the truth or discussing it. All men know the Soviet Union has never started a war but has been repeated victim of invasion, aggression and betrayel. The press is so monopolized that the truth is suppressed or half-told or deliberately lied about all over the land. The chief magazines are owned by banking syndicates. Any man who dares to talk peace or Russia is not only in danger of personal violence as at Peekskill, but what is frightening, may lose his job or find himself in jail, on accusations which often he cannot know because of "security".

Less than a year ago, a prominent member of the Negro College Fund, said openly that advocacy of the FEPC and civil rights was "subversive." Negro postal clerks have been threatened with dismissal for attending a NAACP meeting; and the effort of American Negroes to cooperate with the emancipation of Africa has been officially called dangerous by an Attorney-General of the United States.

I freely admit that in the present Mc Carthy-hysteria and witchhunting, there are Negroes whose responsobility to home and family closes their mouths. But my dear friend, Henry Hunt used to say, "I can keep still in seven languages!" When he did talk he told the truth.

But I am unable to understand why our professional men, our preachers, and business men, our artisans and housewives should join the hounds of American reaction to stop free speech, to hamper thought and the search for truth, just because this happens to be the popular sport today. Paul Robeson is a great American and an honest man. He stands for peace and free speech to fight war and poverty. Whether one agrees with him in all questions or not: every Afro-American should defend his right to think and speak. To sneer at him and help gag him is beneath contempt.
(shortened)

Paul Robeson in Canada
By SYDNEY GORDON

Robeson's activities in the United States and in Britain are, of course, now a part of history. Not so well known is the fact that Robeson also developed a very close, a very militant relationship to the people and especially to the working class of Canada. And I personally was somehow selected by fate to be the first contact man between Robeson and the Canadian working class. It took place in 1942 in rather curious circumstances.

I was then a rather youngish editor of a labor publication called the "Canadian Tribune" in Toronto, and here came the announcement in the newspapers that this great and famous star Paul Robeson was to sing in Toronto for the first time after his return from England. He was to sing in the celebrated series known as the "Toronto-Eton Auditorium" series in which the world's leading artists sang on a Thursday and Saturday evening; thus giving two concerts. And I think it is rather unusual, a series of two concerts by one artist! Now, when we in the "Canadian Tribune" offices read that Paul Robeson was coming to town we looked at each other and we said, "Now, that's our man!"

Canada at the time had the honor of being one of the relatively few countries in the world, in which the Communist party was illegal. The "Canadian Tribune" is not a Communist publication, nevertheless, it was a labor publication with a Marxist viewpoint. As the question arose - how are we going to get an interview with Robeson? - I picked up the telephone and called the hotel where he was staying and was told, Robeson was seeing nobody until after his concerts were over. So I took the last four issues of the "Canadian Tribune" and I said to the other members of the editorial board, "All we have to do with a man like Paul Robeson is to send him some copies of the 'Tribune' with a covering letter and we won't have to say any more. He will know exactly who we are." And so I went over to the hotel with an envelope with four copies of the "Canadian Tribune", left them there with a covering letter, saying - we would like to interview you, and that was all. Greetings from your friends!

The next day I received the telephone call from Paul Robeson personally saying, "Where is everybody?" I said, "Well, I am here. What do you mean?" And he said, "Come on over to the hotel. I've been reading the paper." I rushed over to the hotel, of course, I had never in my wildest dreams at that time thought that I would sit together with Paul Robeson in one hotel room. I came in, he greeted me, of course, with his great booming sincerity and he said, "Man, where is everybody?" He had had his first concert the night before and I said, well, as I understood it the place was sold out. I said I couldn't get any tickets myself until Saturday. He said, "That's not what I mean." He said, "The concert is over and I go backstage and a mass of people around, but nobody but the wealthy, not one comrade around. How do you account for that?" "Well", I said, "the party is illegal here." And I went on to explain that, if it had been known that he would have welcomed comrades to greet him backstage, there would have been one of the greatest demonstrations in Toronto history. But that out of consideration for him we hadn't shown our highly suspect faces. "However", I said, "if you want people to come back-stage whom you know as comrades", I said, "we will spread the word for Saturday night."

On Saturday night I was also present and was one of the members of a vast group of people who went backstage grinning to reassure Robeson that the party was not dead in Canada, despite the fact that it was at the time illegal. From that moment on, of course, Robeson established very close, very personal contacts both with the Marxist movement and with all progressive circles in Canada. His concerts became not only musical events, but his every visit to Canada also became a political event.

And thus it was that in 1944, when the Canadian army had been inactive throughout the war, and the federal government decided that something had to be done somehow to establish a certain contact between the people and the army, and somehow to feature the army without putting it into action. At that time there was the period of the "no second front" - the government proclaimed an Army News Week, an Armed Forces Week, in which the armed forces were to be honored. And so, since the government itself had sponsored this Army Week we decided that we would do it up town in Toronto.

And so we got into touch with Robeson and we said, "How would you like to come? How would you like to sing to an audience of 17,000 people, honoring the Canadian armed forces? The proceeds will go to one of the welfare funds of the 'Toronto Daily Star' and also to the presentation of a mobile blood transfusion unit to the Red Cross Society." We put this up to

Robeson and he immediately responded. He would come willingly without any fee, but characteristically, five hundred Dollars would have to be paid into the special Africa fund that he then supported.

And so it happened that in Canada, during the Army Week, the great central event was a vast concert in Maple Leaf Gardens with 17, 000 people, with mass bands of all the different armed forces, and with Robeson as the guest star. That was in a way typical of Robeson's relationship to Canada.

I might point out, by the way, that Robeson was introduced by Mayor Convoy of Toronto, one of the most conservative of all conservatives, who had his office telephone me, asking if I couldn't send some materials to him on Robeson, so that he would know how to introduce him properly. And on the night of this greatest concert that I have ever been at, Mayor Convoy was introduced as the man who was going to introduce the guest star and here came this Tory with my notes. My first great ghost success as a writer! I had written notes which I had intended him to use as part of a speech, but for him the notes were the speech, which is perhaps also interesting, because he wound up by saying in my words, "Paul Robeson is not only an artist, not only a citizen of the United States, I introduce to you now Paul Robeson, the citizen of the world!"

After that great event Robeson's contacts to Canada proceeded along three lines: First of all, his concerts were always highly successful, always great events. And then, despite all the difficulties of his contracts with the agency monopolies, he began a series of annual "Canadian Tribune" Concerts directly, where he sang in Massy Hall, always packed, 2 500 seats, with all the proceeds going to the "Canadian Tribune". And all kinds of men and women - in very elegant dress - coming to hear him and of course murmuring among themselves, "It is rather terrible that we must hear all this stuff about the 'Canadian Tribune' just because we want to hear Robeson."

And then came his direct contacts with the trade unions of Canada. This especially marked the period when he was put under ban, when the McCarthy inquisition ruled that Robeson was to speak and to sing nowhere. It was during this period that we had probably the most unique concerts in Canadian history. One took place when he was invited to a concert, to a labor concert in Toronto, and he was refused permission by the Canadian government and refused exit by the American government, both of which, of course, have known how to preach about the models of democracy that they represent. On this occasion Robeson was present via telephone! He actually sang to the people by long-distance telephone with the voice amplified in the receiving hall.

Even more dramatic, however, was the concert that took place during the National Convention of the mine, mill and smelter workers, a hard fighting union at the time, which was being attacked by the powerful nickel and gold mining interests. They invited Robeson to come to their Convention in Vancouver in British Columbia. The American authorities, of course, to which Robeson was such a menace, refused to let him out of the country.

What then happened was the following: The conference moved en masse to the border between Canada and the United States to an international park area through which the border runs and Robeson came from the other side and so the singer was in the United States and his audience was in Canada. He sang from the United States and the applause came from Canada, a very rich illustration of what true internationalism is!

Speech at Peace Arch Park 1953
By PAUL ROBESON

I want to just say "Thank you" and "Thank you" again for your very great kindness in coming here today. It means much to us in America - much to the American struggle for peace. Some of the finest people in our country under pressure today, facing jail, facing hostile courts, for the simple fact that they are struggling for peace - struggling for a decent America where all of us who have helped build that land can live in decency and in good will.

As for myself, as I said last year, I remain the same Paul that you have know throughout all these years. But time had made it so that everyone must fight harder today to preserve the basic liberties guaranteed to us Americans by our Constitution.

If this were not so, I would be with you today in Vancouver. I would be traveling all over the Canada that I cherish so deeply to sing for you and talk with you. (Applause) But in America today, it's very difficult to play in the theater or to get a hall to sing in. Whenever I go into a city like St. Louis or to many of the cities, the wrath of all the powers-that-be descends upon one single poor minister who wants to give me his church or descends upon the people who rent the hall. They are told by all the forces in America the banks will no longer honor their mortages - everything to keep just one person from appearing in a concert in this church or in this hall.

I know what it means. They don't want to hear people speak for peace. Many of the bravest working class leaders are in prison. And today we fight in America on the eve of this truce in Corea for the amnesty and the freedom of those leaders to come back and to lead their people. (Applause)

So I can't act or sing in any sort of decent - very seldom, in my own country. From London, an invitation and a contract was sent to me to play "Othello" as soon as I could get there. And at the end of the invitation was a very important phrase: "And we would welcome Paul Robeson to this land." (Applause)

And at the same time, I received an invitation that - I just couldn't receive an invitation that could mean more! It's from the miners in Wales where I first understood the struggle of whites and Blacks together. Years ago I lived in Wales among the miners in the Rondda Valley, I went down into the coal mines with them and later on I did a picture called "Proud Valley". And I have just received an invitation to appear at a festival in October to be given by the miners and by the workers of Wales. I receive a lot of invitations - but I am not permitted to travel.

So it's very important that we are gathered here today, that our government can understand that artists - not only myself, there are so many of us - and scientists, can not be refused the departure. It is incomprehensible that Dr. W. E. B. DuBois cannot leave this country to attend international peace meetings, to attend scientific gatherings all over the earth. And that goes for so many outstanding American scientists, intellectuals, workers, trade union leaders.

And why do they take my passport away? They have said so in a case. They put it in a brief. They said that no matter what my political beliefs, what my standing among the Black people of my own land in America, but they would have to take my passport away anyhow, because out of my own lips - mind you, from my own lips! - for many years, I have been struggling for the

independence of the colonial peoples of Africa. And that is meddling in the foreign affairs of the United States government. (Laughter). Now that's just too bad, because I' m going to have to continue to meddle. (Laughter and applause)

But I stand and I say to you: I am proud of the America in which I was born. I continue to stretch out my hand across the ocean to brave peoples of many lands, across the border to Latin America, to Neruda in Chile, to the brave people of Cuba and Mexico, across the ocean to the lands of Asia. (Applause).

As I say, as an American, as Jefferson in his time stretched his hands across to meet the great heroes of the French Revolution of 1789, I stretch my hand across the continent to shake the hand of the brave Soviet people and of the new People's Democracies. That is my right as an American. (Applause) And I know they sing only the songs of peace there in that land.

An Orange Crate instead of McCarthy Recollection by CHARLES R. ALLEN, Jr.

Back in the early 1950s I had the honor to meet Paul Robeson during a visit to my publishers, the then new and progressive house of Cameron & Kahn, Inc. Our chance meeting occured at the height of the McCarthy Era when the days of the witch-hunt were in full swing. I was then working on a book dealing with the U. S. Senator, Joseph R. McCarthy, titled "The McCarthy Conspiracy".

Mr. Robeson - an impressive figure, of course, when meeting him under any circumstance - was, despite the extraordinary pressures which were relentlessly put upon him, in ebullient spirits.

We both had played one of America's most popular games, football (not to be confused, incidentally, for a moment with European football or what we here call soccer). He had been an All-American player at Rutgers University - the school which founded the game in 1869 - and was celebrated for his vast renown as both player and the first Afro-American to be accorded such high honors. I myself had played both college and professional football - but fully 25 years after Mr. Robeson's era. During that time, the game had undergone many changes.

Merely as a jocular gesture, I kidded Mr. Robeson that he would have been "too small" to play at his old positions, tackle and end, in the more recent period of the game where men of 6' 6" and 280 pounds were commonplace. He goodnaturedly rejoined: "I could still play anythere on the line with any of you guys today!"

Everyone laughed because Mr. Robeson - who was a powerful man, standing well over 6' 4" and weighing at least 230 compactly structured pounds - would hardly be considered 'small' by any standards.

He then challenged: "I' ll show you something we used to do in the old days that I bet none of you young players can do today!"

With that, he lead all of us (our group had grown to include a couple more writers and editors by then) outside into the spring sunshine and down the street to the nearest grocery store.

He strode into the store and asked for an empty orange crate. Puzzled, the manager of the store secured a large, wooden crate that was a rather long, four-sided, slated cubicle closed at both ends. "Here, hold this out away from your body," Mr. Robeson instructed me in his deep, commanding bass. By now a sizeable crowd had gathered in the store, curious and expectant.

"Now!" Mr. Robeson said, "Here's what we used to do just for practice!"

Taking the stance of a defensive lineman, Mr. Robeson suddenly rose up to his full height, his massive chest and shoulders seemed to swell to unbelievable dimensions and then - with a single, surgically precise swing of his mighty forearms and huge hands - he cleaved the orange crate into splinters before the startled gasp of everyone.

"There!" he cried in a resonance which was at once pleased and impatient, "How did you like that!"

We all howled with delight and amazement. "You could still play anywhere!" I shouted in unconcealed admiration. "The next time you meet up with McCarthy," I suggested, "Try that move out on him!"

Mr. Robeson threw back his head, his eyes twinkling and his handsome face wreathed in a sparkling smile, and roared with laughter. A warm, merry Homeric laughter which made all of us feel nine feet tall.

IV. FREEDOM AND FOOD FOR AFRICA

Paul Robeson and His Relations to Africa
By ALEX LA GUMA

The captured Africans who leaped from the slave ships to their deaths; the Afro-American facing the night of white supremacy on the streets of the United States; the heroism of Paul Robeson and Angela Davis, of the Trenton Six and the Wilmington Ten - all this are factors in the bloody history of the struggle which the black man is fighting since centuries.

The struggle of the Afro-American parallels in many ways the struggles of colonial peoples all over the world to rid themselves of exploiters and slave-masters. Dr. Martin Luther King was murdered in Tennessee for the same reasons Patrice Lumumba was murdered in Congo: for the same motives and by the same forces. The African Black man and the American Black man are fighting the common enemy, international imperialism, whether in the form of South African racist troops in Southern Africa or the police forces of the United States. At many places in the world the same struggle goes on against the same enemy for the same reasons.

While we wage our present-day struggle, we must recall at some time the struggles of the past as well. We Africans who today confront the forces of fascism and racist oppression call all the time on the international progressive community for unity and support for our cause. The international alliance of solidarity with oppressed Africa has a history in which the contribution of progressive America has a place. Not only was Paul Robeson closed to us because of his ancestral origins but because he stood great in the long struggle of the American people, both Black and white, for liberation and justice both in his homeland and outside it.

Although of African descent, Paul Robeson did not come in contact with the cause of the African freedom movement until the end of the 1920's. Robeson's "Ol' Man River" he sang in the musical "Showboat" in 1928, was the song of a Black man, which was going around the world.

It is perhaps typical of a man from an oppressed community to feel more at home among others in the same plight, rather than in the company of the high society. So Paul Robeson felt much easier in the company of British dock workers and Welsh miners and the many Africans whom he met. Many of the Africans in London then were students and political workers, and from these Paul Robeson found a revival of Africa within him. Among the Africans he met in London there were several who were to become noteworthy afterwards - men like Jomo Kenyatta, Kwame Nkrumah and others.

It might be of interest to take a quick glance at what was happening in Africa at that time. It was a period when more and more efforts were being made by the colonialists to extract the maximum of wealth from Africa in order to bolster up their tottering economy. Law upon law, regulation upon regulation were introduced in the regions of East and West Africa to ensure the maximum cheap labour and the highest production of raw materials and other wealth.

In the then Tanganyika for example, an unwarranted departure from work was considered a criminal offence; in Uganda regulations enforced every adult African to work for 30 days a year without wages on road construction. Peasants were allowed to sell their crops only within a fixed time in restricted zones and for set prices. The policies of the imperialists transformed the countries of Africa into hell for the Africans and paradise for all foreign exploiters.

Increased exploitation coincided with social and political awareness among Africans and they were inevitably drawn into the antiimperialist movement. In 1920 the Kikuyu of Kenya set up their first organisation; in Tanganyika the establishment of mass peasants' and workers' organisations was a sign of the growing awareness of the working people; in Dahomey in West Africa railway workers launched a significant strike, the first of its kind, likewise, workers took action in Senegal, Guinea, and on the Ivory Coast. These were the first efforts of the modern working class and political movements in Africa.

The Kikuyu Central Association sent their secretary-general, Jomo Kenyatta, to Britain where he carried on intensive work on behalf of the African population of Kenya. It is under these circumstances that Paul Robeson had the opportunity of coming in contact with the African situation. Through these contacts, through the inevitable discussions, Robeson became aware of the continent of his ancestors who had been taken from it in chains.

In what was then the Union of South Africa, a rapid consciousness of the importance of the national liberation struggle of the African people there was also developing at that time. Together with the demands of the oppressed black people for emancipation, a class-consciousness was also taking deep root. African workers saw themselves not only oppressed as black people, but also exploited as workers. Inevitably the ideas of socialism caught the interest of more and more Africans.

It is not coincidental that the visit to the USSR by Paul Robeson in 1934 had the same effect on him as it had on the South African leader Gumede. Paul Robeson on visiting the USSR said that he had seen whole nations of so-called "primitive peoples" now building highly-developed socialist republics, working and building countless new factories, schools, universities, all within twenty years. To him this proved the falsity of the colonialist claim that black people would not be able to rule themselves for thousands of years.

Gumede, a leader of the African National Congress, told a mass meeting of Africans when he returned from the USSR, "I have seen the new world to come, where it has already begun."
He claimed that he had brought the key which would unlock the door to freedom.

Paul Robeson the singer since those days placed his voice and his talent at the service of the struggle for emancipation of the black oppressed, and at the service of all progressive mankind. He was an artist who did not see art in isolation from the problems which beset society, the whole world, the whole of humanity. Becoming more and more aware of the problems of the Afro-American and African people, he was endowed with the wisdom to see the link between black oppression and the rest of the world's problems. It was therefore inevitable that he was drawn into the world-wide anti-fascist struggle of the thirties and subsequent years.

Caught in the whirlpool of the fight to destroy fascism, a fight that was both dramatic and horrible, it was at this time that he saw clearly that he as an artist, a singer, a man of talent, could not possibly stand aloof from the future of humanity. He saw that the artist who was honest could never remain in an ivory tower while mankind was engaged in one of the titanic struggles of its history.

I think that his outlook as an artist is significantly illustrated by a speech made in the Albert Hall London at a rally in support of the Spanish republic and reported in the South African anti-imperialist magazine "The Liberator" in 1937. Paul Robeson said then, "Every artist, every scientist, must decide now where he stands. He has no alternative. There is no standing above the conflict on Olympian heights ... The battlefield is everywhere, there is no sheltered rear ... Fascism fights to destroy the culture which society has created; created through pain and suffering, through desparate toil, but with unconquerable will and lofty vision ... What matters a man's profession or vocation? Fascism is no respecter of pesons. It makes no distinction between combatants and non-combatants ... The artist must take sides; he must elect to fight for freedom or for slavery. I have made my choice. I have no alternative. The history of the capitalist era is characterised by the degradation of my people; despoiled of their lands, their women ravished, their culture destroyed ... I say the true artist cannot hold himself aloof. The legacy of culture from our predecessors is in danger. It is the foundation upon which we build a still more lofty edifice. It belongs not only to us, not only to the present generation - it belongs to posterity and must be defended to the death." These words of Paul Robeson hold good today as they did then.

It was in 1937 that he also helped to found the Council on African Affairs of which he became chairman. Under the first of the Council's objectives, the people of South Africa remember the assistance provided during a severe famine in the eastern part of our country shortly after the Second World War. However, the other aims of the Council provided the opportunity for many Americans to learn the truth about our country. Until then, I believe, most Americans thought in terms of Edgar Rice Burroughs' stories of Tarzan and the Apes, whenever they heard the continent of Africa mentioned.

The South African people also remember with appreciation and affection Paul Robeson's first task when he was released from the USA after the McCarthy persecutions. In 1958, just arrived in Europe from the United States, he sang at St. Paul's Cathedral London in aid of the fund for the defence of South African political prisoners.

As a South African I believe I can say with truth that Paul Robeson had a special spot within himself for my country. We recall that, in 1950, when workers were shot down by the fascist police at a May Day demonstration, Paul Robeson addressed a meeting of the National Labour Conference for Negro Rights, telling his audience: "Twelve South African workers now lie dead, shot in a peaceful demonstration by Malan's fascist police; as silent testimony to the fact that ... it is later than they think in the procession of history, and that rich land must one day return to Africans on whose backs the proud skyscrapers of the Johannesburg rich were built."

Today the South African people stand on the threshold of the final struggle for the liberation of the black majority and the other oppressed communities. In 1961, the armed struggle for the overthrow of fascism in South Africa was begun, for the overthrow of white supremacy, of injustice, of racial hatred and the exploitation of our hard-pressed people. In 1967, the first battalions of our partisan fighters met the racist troops of South Africa and Rhodesia. Our people have died there in the beautiful Zambesi valley, since they have said that they no longer wish to lay down their lives defencelessly.

Unfortunately, the South African movement today cannot say to have won a full success or that victory will come soon. But we have reached the turning point in our history, and we have no doubt that victory will be ours.

A few years ago one President of the USA, claimed that he and his government are against apartheid and racism in South Africa. This is a lie. In the first place, the ruling class of the USA cannot be against racism in South Africa and at the same time condone and encourage it in the United States. Secondly, the United States of America is the second biggest foreign investor in South Africa and millions of dollars in profits are being sucked from the marrow and blood of African exploitation in South Africa.

We South Africans know full well who are our friends and allies in the United States. They are people who - like Paul Robeson - raise their voices in song, and work in the interest of solidarity with the oppressed African people, and give them active support in their fight for freedom, justice and humanity.

"Here I Stand" (Excerpt)
By PAUL ROBESON

... In 1927 I move to England with my family ... London was the center of the British Empire and it was there that I "discovered" Africa. That discovery, which has influenced my life ever since, made it clear that I would not live out my life as an adopted Englishman, and I came to consider that I was an African.

Like most of Africa's children in America, I had known little about the land of our fathers, but in England I came to know many Africans. Some of their names are now known to the world ... Many of the Africans were students, and I spent long hours talking with them and taking part in their activities at the West African Students Union building. Somehow they came to look upon me as one of them; they took pride in my successes; and they made Mrs. Robeson und me honorary members of the Union. Besides these students, who were mostly of princely origin, I also came to know another class of Africans - the seamen in the ports of London, Liverpool and Cardiff. They too had their organizations, and had much to teach me about their lives and their various peoples.

As an artist it was natural that my first interest in Africa was cultural. Culture? The foreign rulers of that continent insisted that there was no culture worthy of the name in Africa. But already musicians and sculptors in Europe were astir with their discovery of African art. And as I plunged, with excited interest, into my studies of Africa at the London School of Oriental Languages, I came to see that African culture was indeed a treasure-store for the world. Those who scorned the African languages as so many "barbarous dialects" could never know, of course, the richness of those languages and of the great philosophy and epics of poetry that have come down through the ages in these ancient tongues.

I studied many of these African languages, as I do to this day: Yoruba, Efik, Twi, Ga and others. Here was something important, I felt, not only for me as a student but for my people at home, and I expressed that thought in an article, "The Culture of the Negro," published in The Spectator (June 15, 1934), from which I quote these lines:

> "It is astonishing and, to me, fascinating to find a flexibility and subtlety in a language like Swahili, sufficient to convey the teachings of Confucius, for example, and it is my ambition to guide the Negro race by means of its own peculiar qualities to a higher degree of perfection along the lines of its natural development. Though it is a commonplace to anthropologists, these qualities and attainments of Negro languages are entirely unknown to the general public of the Western world and, astonishingly enough, even to Negroes themselves. I have met Negroes in the United States who believed that the African

Negro communicated his thoughts by means of gestures, that, in fact, he was practically incapable of speech and merely used sign language!

It is my first concern to dispel this regrettable and abysmal ignorance of the value of its own heritage in the Negro race itself. ..."

I felt as one with my African friends and became filled with a glowing pride in these riches, new found to me. I learned that along with the towering achievements of the cultures of ancient Greece and China there stood the culture of Africa, unseen and denied by the imperialist looters of Africa's material wealth. I came to see the roots of my own people's culture, especially in our music which is still the richest and most healthy in America. Scholars had traced the influence of African music to Europe - to Spain with the Moors, to Persia and India and China, and westward to the Americas. And I came to learn of the remarkable kinship between African and Chinese culture.

My pride in Africa, and it grew with the learning, impelled me to speak out against the scorners. I wrote articles for the "New Statesman and Nation", "The Spectator" and elsewhere championing the real but unknown glories of African culture. I argued and discussed the subject with men like H. G. Wells, and Laski, and Nehru; with students and savants.

Now, there was a logic to this cultural struggle I was making, and the powers-that-be realized it before I did. The British Intelligence came one day to caution me about the political meaning of my activities. For the question loomed of itself: If African culture was what I insisted it was, what happens then to the claim that it would take 1,000 years for Africans to be capable of self-rule?

It was an African who directed my interest in Africa to something he had observed in the Soviet Union. On a visit to that country he had traveled east and had seen the Yakuts, a people who had been classed as a "backward race" by the Czars. He had been struck by the resemblance between the tribal life of the Yakuts and his own people of East Africa. What would happen to a people like the Yakuts now that they had been freed from colonial oppression and were part of the construction of a socialist society?

Well, I went to see for myself and on my first visit to the Soviet Union in 1934 I saw how the Yakuts and the Uzbeks and all the other formerly oppressed nations were leaping ahead from tribalism to modern industrial economy, from illiteracy to the heights of knowledge. Their ancient cultures blooming in new and greater richness. Their young men and women mastering the sciences and arts. A thousand years? No. Less than twenty! ...

Conference of the Council on African Affairs on the Relations of the American People and their Government to Africa's Place in the War and in the Post-War World, April 14, 1944
Speech by PAUL ROBESON

I do not think there is any need to justify our discussion of this problem on the score that the United States is not one of the political rulers of Africa. Although Americans in the past have known little about Africa beyond the caricatures occasionally represented in American movies, most of them today are beginning to realize, I think, that the welfare of 150 million Africans and other colonial oppressed peoples who make up almost half of the world's population is something that directly concerns their own welfare. This war, a large part of which has been and is being fought in colonial areas, has brought this truth home to them.

There has been lately an increasing volume of literature dealing with Africa and colonial territories in general. In it one finds quite a variety of viewpoints expressed.

The first that I have in mind I would call the "new imperialist" school of thought. Representative of this school is the author of an article in "Fortune" magazine some months ago who started off by describing Africa as "the last great continental frontier of the world for the white man to cross," and as "the jack-pot of World War II." He then proceeded to paint a glowing picture of Africa's vast undeveloped wealth - with no mention, of course, of the inhabitants. Such stuff is made-to-order propaganda for the imperialism.

Another school of colonial thought quite vocal at the present time I would speak of as the "yes-but apologists." These writers go so far as to acknowledge that there have been some mistakes and short-comings in colonial rule, and they admit that progress of the dependent peoples toward a better life is slow. But then comes the "buts". "But" look at how much has been accomplished. "But" look how backward the people are, and how complex the problems are that must be solved. "But" we must be patient and persevere. All this boils down to advocacy of the status quo in the colonial system.

The trouble with proponents of both these points of view is that they do not take into account what is happening in the world. Being apparently blind to the present, they see the future as merely the shadow of the past. They are chained to the past.

Let us look at the present a moment. There exists today the fact of cooperation toward common democratic goals among the nations of the world on a scale never known before in history. That fact, which was established at the Moscow, Cairo, and Teheran meetings, lays the basis for international collaboration in the development of dependent areas and peoples - an entirely new approach to colonial problems. And it means the end of imperialism, imperialist exploitation, and imperialist rivalries.

There is another important fact of the present day world which must be taken into account in thinking about the future of colonial peoples. That is the concrete demonstration which the Soviet Union has given to the world of how, with systematic planning, a vast territory can be transformed in the space of a couple of decades from the most primitive, feudal agricultural economy into a modern agricultural and industrial economy; and of how many millions of peoples of different languages and cultures can be raised from illiteracy, poverty, and degradation to a high level of development with flourishing social, cultural and political institutions of their own.

And let us not, in discussing post-war plans, lose sight of the fact that the primary task still before us is the winning of the war. The whole character of the post-war world depends, first of all, upon the outcome of the war. And not simply upon victory - we have no doubts about that - but upon how quickly and decisively victory is won. If there is undue prolongation of the war or compromise with the enemy, as a result of reactionary elements here and abroad gaining ascendancy over the will of the majority, we shall have lost what we are fighting for. The winning of the war and the winning of a real peace cannot be separated.

Madison Square Garden Rally, June 6, 1946 sponsored by the Council on African Affairs Speech by PAUL ROBESON

I have spoken for other causes on other occasions in this great hall. And while they were all important causes about which I was keenly concerned, I think I can say that never before have I faced such an audience as this with the sense of responsibility, of urgency, of intimacy with you that I now feel.

The Negro - and I mean American Negroes as well as West Indians and Africans - has a direct and first-hand understanding, which most other people lack, of what imperialist exploitation and oppression is. With him it is no far-off theoretical problem. In his daily life he experiences the same system of job dicrimination, segregation, and denial of democratic rights whereby the imperialist overlords keep hundreds of millions of people in colonial subjection throughout the world.

The one basic difference is that here in America the Negro has the law - at least partially and in some sections of the country - on his side, and he has powerful allies in the ranks of white organized labor directly involved in his daily fight for justice. In Africa, in the West Indies, and in Asia, the colonial peoples wage a desperate struggle for recognition simply as human beings - as human beings to whom human rights are due. And these colonial peoples fight alone in each country - alone except for the help which reaches them from afar, from world-conscious labor in free countries and from other anti-fascist, anti-imperialist forces.

And that is why we are gathered here tonight. Because our own rights and liberties - even though limited - are far, far greater than those of our brothers in colonial bondage. Because we must exercise the greater strength which we have to help win freedom for them. And also because in that very process of helping others, we add to our own strength and bring nearer full freedom for ourselves.

Besides people like those of us who are here tonight, there is another category of Americans, quite few in number, but extremely powerful, who are interested in Africa. They are concerned, however, not with the people of the continent of Africa, but with the wealth that they can extract from it, and from the labor of the people there. These American financiers and corporation heads have their own ideas about the future of Africa, and they don't include the idea of freedom. You can be sure of that. And another thing you can be sure of is that they're not losing any time in putting their ideas into action.

Our government, reports indicate, is getting uranium from the Belgian Congo for atomic bombs. American companies are prospecting for oil in Ethiopia and for minerals in Liberia. These manifestations of a new and heightened interest in Africa on the part of American Big Business represent a challenge to the rest of us.

The race is on - in Africa as in every other part in the world - the race between the forces of progress and democracy on the one side and the forces of imperialism and reaction on the other. And Africa, with the immense undeveloped and unmeasured wealth of resources, is a major price which imperialists covet and which we, the anti-imperialists, must defend.

We on the anti-imperialist side are handicapped by lack of money, lack of powerful organization, lack of influence in state and international affairs. But, although the enemy has all the advantage and has a head start in the race, it is yet possible for us to catch up and win. It is possible to win if the majority of the American people can be brought to see and understand in the fullest sense the fact that the struggle in which we are engaged is not a matter of mere humanitarian sentiment, but of life and death. The only alternative to world freedom is world annihilation - another bloody holocaust - which will dwarf the two world wars through which we have passed.

We have been hearing a lot of talk about a coming war. It has been defined by some of the bolder reactionaries in brutally clear terms as a war of the United States and Great Britain against the Soviet Union. This war-mongering is the logical consequence of the get-tough-with-Russia policy preached and practiced by those who direct American and British foreign policy.

"Stop Russia!" the brass voices cry in chorus, and the men behind the voices hope that the people will be afraid and will turn against their wartime ally. Their frantic cries mask the program of imperialist aggression which these men themselves are seeking to impose upon the world.

The "Stop Russia" cry really means: stop the advance of the colonial peoples of Asia and Africa toward independence; stop the forces of the new democracy developing in Europe; stop the organized workers of America from trying to hold their ground against their profit-greedy employers; stop the Negro people from voting and joining trade unions in the South. "Stop Russia" means: stop progress - maintain the status quo. It means: let the privileged few continue to rule and thrive at the expense of the masses.

A day or two ago Mr. Bevin, the British Foreign Minister said, and I quote, "If we do not want to have total war, we must have total peace". For once I agree with him. But Mr. Bevin must be totally blind if he cannot see that the absence of peace in the world today is due precisely to the efforts of the British, American and other imperialist powers to retain their control over the peoples of Asia, the Middle East, Europe and Africa.

We must indeed win the peace - a total peace - but we can do it only by using methods exactly the opposite of those persued at present by the British Foreign Office and our own State Department. To win total peace there must be total freedom.

At San Francisco, a year ago, it was the Soviet Foreign Minister, Mr. Molotov, who said, "From the viewpoint of the interests of international security, we must first of all see to it that dependent countries are enabled as soon as possible to take the path of national independence."

But we are still waiting for the first European power in Africa to declare that its African subjects may exercise the right of self-determination and achieve self-government in the next ten years or even the next hundred years.

The colonial rulers will tell you that the Africans will not be ready for self-government in any forseable future. They lie. They would delude you into believing that the African peoples had no governments, no culture before the Europeans came to Africa. They would delude you into believing that Africans are content to remain under European tutelage, and that this tutelage must continue indefinitely.

You have heard from other speakers tonight what sort of tutelage the rulers of Africa provide. How can they dare pose as so-called guardians of the African? How can they dare claim the right to continue in that role? The Soviet Union has demonstrated how it is possible to wipe out colonialism and even within a single generation. No wonder that the imperialist cry "Stop Russia!"

That cry must be drowned out by the voice of the American people demanding Big Three Unity for Colonial Freedom!

To arouse all sections of our population to the urgency of that demand has been the purpose of the meeting. But we do not in any sense regard our job as finished with the close of this great rally. On the contrary, my friends, the Council on African Affairs regards this job as having just begun. With your help, with the co-operation of the organizations with which you are

associated and with the support of millions of like-minded peoples throughout our country and in other countries we shall win the fight against the forces of imperialism.

Tomorrow is our day, the day of the common people. By God's grace and our united strength we shall win the freedom and peace for ourselves and for all the oppressed peoples of the earth!

A Magical Presence
Recollection by ALBERT MALTZ

It is the summer of 1949! Twenty thousand people have assembled in Madison Square Garden in New York to protest the trial of Communist leaders on a charge of advocating the overthrow of the government by force and violence. One does not have to be a Communist to know that it is a phony charge and its purpose is to curb free speech and intimidate political opposition to the government. The final speaker is Paul Robeson. The twenty thousand are on their feet, applauding and shouting madly. I think to myself that he speaks at too great length. But I may be alone in this sentiment. The audience is his for as long as he cares to speak. A magical presence!

A MESSAGE
from the Chairman of the Council on African Affairs
September 1949

To Members and Friends of the Council on African Affairs: I want to take this means of conveying a personal message and word of greeting to all my friends and all supporters of our work in the Council. Some of you I saw and talked with at the Welcome Home Rally in Harlem - and I want to thank you and tell you how deeply moved I was by that marvelous tribute. Others of you I have seen as I have gone around in New York, Chicago, and Washington, D. C., helping in the fight against Jim-Crowism in these places.

But to the many others all across America whom I have not yet seen - to all of you, my friends - I want to say that I come back from Europe more determined than I have ever been in my life to give my maximum time and energies in the fight for full freedom, full equality, for the Negro people. I will not compromise a hair's-breadth in that fight - nor will the Council. Intimidation and terrorization are increasing daily in America, particularly against the Negro. The would-be American fascists become bolder and bolder. What they did in Peekskill, N. Y. on the night of August 27 was just what Hitler's storm troopers did to German anti-fascists. They were not merely attacking me personally; they were attacking the Negro people, the Jewish people and all who stand for peace and democracy in America. But we will not be cowed. And we will not forget that our fight for Negro rights here is linked inseparably not only with the struggle of all American workers, but also with the liberation movements of the peoples of the Caribbean and Africa and of the colonial world in general. This is particularly true of the present period when the Big Money Rulers of America have taken on the role of bankers and overlords of all Western Europe and its colonial holdings. The one force which stands as the barrier to all the war-mongers, profiteers and fascists who would engulf the world in a third blood bath is the united strength of democratic and peace-loving peoples of all colors, all races, and faiths throughout the world. In England the Electrical Trades Union, whose members I addressed, has contributed 1 000 Dollars for work on behalf of freedom for Africans. In Scotland I saw miners as they came out of the pits give hundreds of dollars out of their earnings to the same cause. American workers must and will do no less.

I ask you to stand with us in the Council, to help build and strengthen our organization in every community, so that it may play its most effective role against our oppressors and false leaders, and in fighting for the rights of Negroes here and in Africa and for our common freedom.

PAUL ROBESON

Food and Freedom for Africa
A Message from PAUL ROBESON
published in "Daily Worker", June 5, 1946

Europe and Asia have been devastated by war and their people are hungry. Americans have been urged to make sacrifices and share their food with the unfortunate people across the Atlantic.

But Africa, too, is hungry. In the Union of South Africa alone, eight millions Negro people are faced with mass starvation. Their desperate plight is practically unknown to the outside world. Will Americans ignore the need of these African millions?

Hunger and lack of freedom always go hand in hand. Even in good times the Bantu people of South Africa suffer chronic starvation. Robbed of their land, confined in "reserves" and ghettos, and reduced to the most subservient level of employment by a legal color bar, these Africans are victims of a systematic oppression which can hardly be comprehended except by those who have lived under fascist tyranny.

In normal times the grinding poverty of these people accounts for an infant mortality rate that reaches 600 to 700 per one thousand. Africans earning as little as 30 or 40 cents a day are forced to pay as much as 11 cents for a single slice of bread.

The Council on African Affairs has been able, through the generous response of those reached through its campaign, to send a considerable quantity of canned food and money to aid these stricken people. But more, much more, needs to be done.

We Americans, however, have the responsibility of providing something more than food for the people of Africa - the whole of Africa with its 150 million colonial subjects. We must see that their demands for freedom are heard and answered by America and the United Nations. For without economic and political freedom, there cannot be any abiding relief from poverty and hunger.

This is no mere theoretical obligation which tests upon America to advance African freedom. It is an obligation which stems from the millions of American dollars invested in Africa's gold, copper, diamonds and rubber. It is an obligation which stems from the lives of American soldiers sacrificed to defeat the fascist enemy in Africa. It is an obligation which stems from the position of leadership which America holds in world affairs today.

It is our solemn duty as Americans, as a liberty-loving people, to join hands with the millions upon millions of exploited and oppressed colonial peoples in Africa and throughout the world. NOW is the time for action, if we hope to build a free world.

PAUL ROBESON'S Statement on behalf of the Council on African Affairs, concerning the Justice Department's Order for that Organization to Register under the McCarran Act New York, April 24, 1953

The consistent job of the Council on African Affairs through the years since its establishment in 1937 has been to provide accurate information on the conditions and struggles of the peoples of Africa and to support their efforts toward liberation. In recent months the Council has endeavored to rally American assistance for the desperate fight of black and brown South Africans against Malan's fascist oppression, and for the Africans of Kenya whose struggle for land and survival the British seek to crush with the most ruthless and inhuman punitive measures.

For such work as this the Council, I am proud to say, has received many expressions of gratitude and appreciation from African leaders. It would appear, therefore, that in branding the Council as 'subversive' and ordering it to register under the notorious McCarran Act, U. S. authorities are at the same time branding as 'subversive' all the millions of Africans who are today determined to be free of the stigma of colonialism and white supremacy domination.

This attack upon the Council represents an attempt to frighten and silence all those Americans, particularly the Negro people, who are in any way critical of U. S. policies in Africa.

Those policies are directed toward the establishment of military bases in Africa without consultation with or the consent of the people in the so-called strategic areas. They aim at the extraction of the maximum quantities of uranium, manganese, copper, bauxite and scores of other African raw materials for U. S. war stockpiles and industry. They entail U. S. financial and diplomatic support for the Malan regime and for the European bosses of Africa in order to maintain the white supremacy status quo (as in our own Dixiecrat South) and 'security' for the expanding American investments in Africa.

All this may be found explicitly or implicitly stated in numerous statements of administration leaders and in such documents as "The Overseas Territories in the Mutual Security Program" issued last year by the Mutual Security Administration. These policies and practices are a matter of official U. S. record, and not simply 'Communist propaganda', as is alleged.

The Council on African Affairs opposes these policies because they are detrimental to the interests of both African and Americans. The Government in its charge against the Council dodges the real issue of the right of American citizens to criticize policies of state and poses instead a wholly false issue. Is it 'subversive' not to approve our Government's action of condoning and abetting the oppression of our brothers and sisters in Africa and other lands?

It is a matter of shame that at the recent meeting of the U. N. General Assembly it was our own country, the United States, which voted with the European colonial powers against resolutions in the interest of the peoples of Africa, - resolutions which were supported by the majority of the U. N., including India and the other Asian, Middle Eastern and African member states, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and the Soviet Union.

The real issue in our case is the right of advocacy and support for the freedom of Africa's enslaved millions, - including the descendants of Africa who have yet to achieve their full liberty and rights here in the United States. The Council on African Affairs will continue to carry forward its work and will fight all efforts to restrict its usefulness to the cause of African freedom by means of the unconstitutional and un-American McCarran Act.

V. HERE I AM HUMAN BEING – MEETINGS WITH THE SOVIET UNION

"I Breathe Freely" Interview with Paul Robeson in Moscow by JULIA DORN published in "New Theatre", July 1935

Paul Robeson, looking for a medium and a starting-point from which to determine the true African culture, has found in Soviet Russia the closest and most friendly attitudes to his own. The internationally known Negro singer and actor, at the end of his first visit to the Soviet Union early this year, said, "In Soviet Russia I breathe freely for the first time in my life. It is clear, whether a Negro is politically a Communist or not, that of all the nations in the world, the modern Russians are our best friends."

Since he speaks Russian, Robeson was able to talk directly with children, peasants and workers. Everywhere, in tramways, buses, streets and parks, he met with the same reaction from the people, he told his interviewer. "I was rested and buoyed up by the lovely, honest, wondering looks which did not see a 'Negro'," he said. "When these people looked at me, they were just happy, and interested. There were no 'double looks,' no venom, no superiority ..."

Looking for roles and songs, he has reached the same conclusion as Professor Kislitsan, the Russian sociologist, who has announced facts to prove that all races are related in culture, differing in the degree of their development only so far as they are affected by natural resources or the hindrances of exploitation.

"I find," declared Paul Robeson, "that the handicraft of certain periods of the Chinese and African cultures are almost identical; and that the Negro is more like the Russian in temperament and character."

Robeson has taken a keen interest in the Soviet minorities, their culture and the policy on national minorities. During his short stay in Moscow, he talked with representatives of the Commissariat of Public Education, and saw the policy in action. He plans to return to the Soviet Union to make a serious study of minority groups, which is to be linked with his intensive researches into Asiatic and African culture. He has insisted, in answer to press comments labelling his interest in Africa "jingoistic", that he is not trying to "escape" race oppression in America and Europe by taking a nationalist attitude.

"I came here," he says, "because the Soviet Union is the only place where ethnology is seriously considered and applied ... Africa does not realize that it has something to contribute, that it has a culture as clear as the European. The Africans, instead of preserving their own culture, are fighting the idea of 'be what you are', and go European as soon as they can ... The African and American Negro problem is not purely racial. These cultures must be freed, formulated, and developed, and this cannot be done without a change in the present system. The Negro cannot develop his culture until he is free."

Africa must be taught to be proud of its contributions. "Stalin speaks of the cultures of the different nationalities of the Soviet Union as 'socialist in content and national in form' ..."

Mr. Robeson was interested in the Eastern and Russian music, which he believes African music strongly resembles. "The Negro folk songs and African music strongly resemble Eastern and Russian music. When I approached Russia, I found that I was interested in the Eastern part. I can't read Turgeniev, whose language is influenced by France and the West," said Mr. Robeson, who reads and speaks Russian fluently," but I am interested in Gogol and Pushkin, who show more Eastern and Tartar influence ..."

Paul Robeson is vitally interested in the efforts of the Western Negroes to free themselves. He stated, "I believe there is no such thing in England and America as inter-racial cooperation from the NAACP point of view. Our freedom is going to cost so many lives that we mustn't talk about the Scottsboro case as one of sacrifice. When we talk of freedom, we don't discuss lives. Before the Negro is free, there will be many Scottsboros. The Communist emphasis in that case is right."

Becoming more personal, Mr. Robeson spoke of needing something to sing outside of Negro and English folk songs, and Western peasant folk material, and of discovering, about four years ago, the Hebrew and Russian songs. He learned the two languages, finding that they were both quite easy for him.

"There is little audience in England and America for the things I feel like singing or playing. They want Negro religious songs from which they take, not the suffering, but the comfort of the resignation they express (not heeding that the song's cry for heaven is only a reflex from the Negro's having suffered hell on earth) ..."

Although he did not give any concerts during this visit, Mr. Robeson sang some of his most popular songs to the workers of the Kaganovitch Ball Bearing Plant, where he was applauded by a group including a great many foreign and American workers. He also broadcast; and on his return, he plans a concert tour of folk songs, and there is talk of a film with Eisenstein. He said, "The most important development in Soviet culture I have seen is in the moving picture field."

Among the theatres he visited, Mr. Robeson was most interested in the Moscow Children's Theatre, and the Realistic Theatre. At the former, he was pleased by 'The Negro Boy' and the 'Monkey', a popular play about a little African who comes to the Soviet Union and is guided by his Pioneer comrades. The production method of Oxlopkhov (regisseur of the Realistic Theatre) impressed him with its similarity to motion picture technique, which he feels is best adapted to the tempo of life in the Soviet Union. Its plan, with the audience surrounding the stage platform, and participating in the performance, agrees with his own feeling that the artist should be in close contact with his audience.

Paul Robeson's activities have been put, with the enlargement of his interest, on an international scale, including studies and experiments in Eastern cultures along with his participation in African and American affairs. In correlating racial cultures, he sets a standard of awareness, saying, "The Negro must be conscious of himself and yet international, linked with the nations which are culturally akin to him."

Robeson and the Struggle of the Afro-Americans for Liberation By IGOR GEYEVSKI

We in the Soviet Union are watching the struggle of the Afro-Americans with great sympathy. The movement for the liberation of Angela Davis had literally assumed a popular character. It is also a fact that every family knows Paul Robeson's name and songs and calls him lovingly Pavel Vassilich. He is respected as an expressive protest singer of the Afro-Americans and appreciated for his determination to achieve their liberation from enslavement. He is acclaimed as a courageous fighter against imperialism and we also honor and love him as a great artist and as a great friend of the Soviet Union.

About eight years ago I travelled across the USA and my strongest impression was of a rally in Chicago. A huge hall was filled with 6,000 people, most of them black, youngsters and old people as well as children. On to the stage came a very handsome, young, well-built Negro, the popular organizer James Jackson. On either side of him were four men, dressed in leather jackets with their hands in their pockets and one could sense that these hands were not empty. They watched the hall, obviously prepared to act against any unwelcome provocateur. After all, one must protect one's leader. Then Jackson started speaking. He said, "Although we may be poor, we are somebody!" and the whole audience repeated with one voice, "We are somebody!" "Although we may be hungry, we are somebody! Although they may persecute us, jail us, send police against us, we are somebody!" And 6,000 voices repeated, "We are somebody!" It was a most moving scene. When I was in that hall I sensed quite clearly the great progress that has taken place in the minds of the Afro-Americans. I not only sensed their suffering but also their consciousness of their own potential, their determination to struggle and their feeling of pride.

Nowadays the national consciousness of the Afro-Americans is greater than ever before as is their sense of pride in their people, their race and the African peoples. That is long since past that the black Americans was anxious for looking like whites, they no longer try to straighten their hair or whiten their skins. Fifty years ago many a Negro might have been proud of a white skin but nowadays the popular slogan among the Afro-Americans is: "Black is beautiful!" This feeling of pride in their own people is a healthy feeling which has specific roots.

Looking into the past, the 'thirties' and 'forties', the correctness of James Baldwin's statement is clear: "Two men achieved a great deal during those years, the world boxing champion Joe Louis and Paul Robeson." For three centuries a Negro had no right to defend his sister, his beloved wife, even himself. But when Joe Louis won his fight, defeating a white boxer in a world championship, it was a great accomplishment for the black people in the USA. By raising his gloved hand in the ring he also raised the spirit of the black people and their belief in their own power.

Of even greater significance were the successes and victories achieved by Paul Robeson on the cultural front. He has world significance and international recognition, and through him millions of afro-american boys and girls - those who nowadays constitute the nucleus of the liberation movement - have become aware that they can trust their own abilities and strength and that they are capable of climbing to the summit in every field of human culture.
Unfortunately, precious little is being published on this in the United States.

The press and literature in the USA, excluding of course the Communist and progressive press and literature, is extremely unjust towards Robeson in relation to his role in liberating the black people.

Whenever your read a book on the history of the movement to liberate the black people, you read that is was Martin Luther King who linked the liberation movement of the Afro-Americans with the anti-war drive. Although I in no way wish to belittle the tremendous merits of Martin Luther King, but one must give credit to the objective historical fact that Robeson was the first of the great black organizers to raise the banner of opposition to imperialist wars. It was he who combined the struggle of the colored people and the anti-war movement.

Or let us examine another issue, that of the struggle waged by black Americans in the international arena. Many authors in the USA claim that this was achieved by Malcolm X, a popular negro leader who was murdered in 1965, and that Malcolm X was the first international ambassador of the Afro-Americans. Malcolm X did visit more than twenty countries in Africa, the Far East, in Europe and Canada. Again I do not want to belittle the merits of such a sincere fighter and a man who, regardless of his mistakes, unmasked US imperialism abroad over and over again. However, historical facts show that long before Malcolm X Robeson's voice, the voice of a singer and fighter, was heard in many countries throughout the world. In 1964, Malcolm X tried to bring the issue of the oppression of the Afro-Americans before the conscience of the United States. He failed. But twelve years earlier William Patterson and Paul Robeson had fulfilled an historical role by voicing the accusation of genocide and by charging the United Nations to concern itself with the racial problem and by doing so they made a deep impact on world public opinion.

A few of the young afro-american leaders in the USA today criticize the civil rights movement, claiming that such rights in themselves do not yet guarantee equality. While this is certainly true the struggle to secure civil rights is, however, a necessary stage in the struggle for the liberation of the black people. These young organizers are not the first to have pointed out that the demands of the civil rights movement are too limited.

Robeson already wrote in 1956: "Granting of our civil liberties, the same as those of other Americans, does not guarantee complete genuine equality. To win these liberties is not a maximum but only a minimum necessity." This is historically correct.

Our duty as Robeson's friends is to do everything possible to publish the whole truth about his real merits in his fight against imperialism and war, in his fight for proletarian internationalism and the friendship among all peoples, to do everything possible, that one can discern and appreciate his inestimable signification as a model for the young generation.

Open Letter to Soviet Writer Boris Polevoi By PAUL ROBESON published in "Masses and Mainstream", October 1954

Dear Boris Polevoi:

It is late at night, but through the open window of this room comes the sound of people still moving about on the streets. Harlem - this vast Negro city-within-a-city - seems always astir. Like the crowded dwellings which can barely contain the mass of humanity that is hemmed into this neighborhood by the invisible walls of racism, the very hours of the day seem too cramped for the surging life of the people. Working people, most of them are - working hard to pay the landlord, for rents here are as high as the buildings are dilapidated; struggling to live another week, another month; strugg-

ling to attain some recognition of their human dignity that has been denied them so long in this land. And laughing, too - "laughing to keep from crying," as they say; and snatching moments of gaiety at a dance-hall, a movie, a street-corner tavern.

Tonight I am at my son's house: and there he is, hunched over a table on the other side of the room. The lamplight deepens the heavy frown on his youthful brow. Indeed, it is a very serious problem my son must ponder about, for in front of him is a chessboard with the black and white pieces joined in crucial combat, and his opponent is - an international grandmaster!

His opponent - is it Smyslov? - or Bronstein, perhaps? - is not actually present, but Paul is replaying the moves from one of the games in the chess tournament recently held here in New York between the visiting Soviet masters and their American hosts.

The tournament score was 20 to 12 in favor of the Soviet chess team, but it seemed to me that the most meaningful score was posted before the first move was made in the opening round. I mean the victory scored by the American chess players whose federation insisted on bringing this match to our shores; and the loser was Dulles and his State Department who tried to block this gesture of friendship. What a pleasure it was for us to join in the hearty applause of the spectators when the spokesmen for each team expressed their firm desires for peace and cultural exchange between our countries!

Yes, my friend, there truly is "another America" - the America of the common people who dread the thought of another war and yearn to live in a world at peace. Their voice is never heard on the official "Voice of America." The warmongering press and radio speak, as does Mr. Dulles, only for the handful of billionaires who dominate our country and who seek to dominate the world. Largely inarticulate, terrorized by fascists like Senator McCarthy, and often confused by the steady barrage of war propaganda which tells them that the world-cry for peace is a "communist plot," nevertheless the American people respond to the cause of peace and progress whenever that cause can get a hearing. Let me give you some examples of that truth from my own experiences during these difficult days.

Only recently I sang in a concert at the University of Chicago. The student organization which invited me was subjected to various pressures to get them to cancel the offer; local reactionary groups threatened violence against any who dared to attend; the newspapers fiercely denounced the concert as "un-American". But the students stood firm, and the result - a packed hall of 1,500 people, with hundreds more turned away for lack of room! As always I included on the program songs of other lands, and songs of the Russian people, like Moussorgsky's "After the Battle"; and the message of peace and democracy that I brought was warmly received.

Sometime soon I shall return to Chicago, for a concert on the South Side - the large Negro community of that city. Last summer such a concert was planned, and when no hall could be hired because of the terror, the gathering was held in Washington Park. Indeed, no hall in that neighborhood could have held the audience which thronged to the park that bright Sunday afternoon - ten thousand people, most of them Negro workers from the steel mills and meat-packing plants, and many of these workers were recent arrivals from the deep South, from the cotton plantations of Mississippi. A large number of the Negro middleclass also attended - doctors, lawyers, school-teachers, and clergymen.

I'm sure there were many in that great crowd who never before had heard the truth about the Soviet Union. They listened intently as I told of my visits to the Land of Socialism of how I had found there a society in which for the first time in my life I, a Negro, son of a former chattel slave, had known what it feels like to be free and equal. I told them of how deeply I was moved when, on a later visit, I saw in the school books from which my son studied that the lessons of human brotherhood were being taught to the Soviet children. I told about the many nations and races that comprise the Soviet Union, and of how those peoples who had known colonial and racist oppression in the old days had achieved national liberation and were marching forward with giant strides, firmly united with, and equal among, their Russian brothers who had led the way.

After the concert, as they crowded around the platform to grip my hand, my heart was filled by this demonstration of militant support that united me with these industrial workers in the North who are closely linked with the great mass of Negroes in the South, the toilers on the land who yearn to be free from three long centuries of cruel oppression.

Soon after that wonderful day, I found myself at another memorable outdoor-concert. Although I am not permitted to travel outside the United States, this concert was in fact a cultural exchange between nations. It was held at Peace Arch Park, on the U. S.-Canadian border between our state of Washington and the province of British Columbia. This concert, a mass demonstration for peace, was sponsored by the Vancouver (Canada) district of the Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers Union.

I might mention here that this union of metal-ore miners has a rich heritage of working-class struggle, for it grew out of the old Western Federation of Miners and the heroic strike struggles led by "Big Bill" Haywood, who, forced to flee from savage persecution after the first world war, lived out his last years in the Soviet Union and whose ashes were buried in the Kremlin wall. From the early struggles of this union came the martyred organizer, Joe Hill, killed by the copper trust in Utah - the same Joe Hill of whom I sing and who himself was the foremost writer of songs for the American working people.

Well, out there in the great Northwest, where this concert was held, the spirit of the working class - the spirit of democracy and internationalism - is rooted deep. People came from miles around, filling the roads like overflowing streams, and when they were all assembled in the park, there was an audience of 40,000 men, women and children! Never before in the history of that region, the police admitted, had there been so large a public gathering.

Peace - yes, here was the floodtide of the people's hopes! Here, at the border I am forbidden to cross, was a demonstration of that force which no national boundaries can stop, a demonstration of that force which will surely impose the peace, as we all vowed at the World Peace Congress in Paris. Yes, here was a powerful expression of the peoples' will for a world of peaceful coexistence, of friendly relations and cultural exchange - a rally of working-class solidarity against the profiteers of war!

In a few days I am going back to the Canadian border for another such concert. In the year that has passed since that last great rally of Canadian and American workers, the peace forces of the world have grown stronger. The onrushing tide of the colonial liberation movement - in Asia, in Africa, in Latin America - brings vast new legions into the camp of peace and freedom. Dulles cries out for "united action," for war against the peoples, but those whom he counted on to be his allies have come to see that peaceful coexistence is infinitely better than atomic disaster.

Here in America the Big Lie is still official doctrine. Repression continues and sharpens against those who speak out for civil rights and peace. New inquisitions are started daily; new fascist-like laws are being passed in Congress, new victims are being framed-up and sentenced to prison. But though Senator McCarran embraces Franco, and Senator McCarthy invokes the ghost of Goebbels, the American people are not fascists. The democratic tradition of Jefferson and Lincoln and Douglass and Whitman still runs deep among the common people.

No one could miss the popular alarm and protest that flared up all over the country when Vice-President Nixon recently suggested that American soldiers be sent to fight the Vietnamese. And lately we have seen that the idea of peaceful coexistence, almost totally suppressed in recent years, has now become a matter of public discussion, with spokesmen for broad sections of public opinion openly advocating a change in official policy on this subject. This discussion in itself is a breakthrough for peace, and I am sure that the common sense of the American people, who only a decade ago supported President Roosevelt and recognized with him that American-Soviet friendship was indispensable for world peace, will bring them to see that truth again.

Then, instead of this miserable cold war, we will have the sunshine of a lasting peace: our artists, writers, scientists, workers, students and farmers will come to know each other; and in place of the Big Lie the great truth of human brotherhood shall prevail.

As a firm and devoted friend, I salute the great peoples of the Soviet Union, who have opened a new chapter in human history and are writing by their heroism the story of real men, of real women, and of their children, who shall inherit the unlimited future.

The Kidnapping of Paul Robeson
By FRANZ LOESER
published in "Die Weltbühne", No. 14/1977

When the tree-long, black US citizen landed at New York airport he knew exactly what to expect. As always when he returned from a visit to the Soviet Union the customs' officials would pounce on him and search him very thoroughly. They would not only go through his luggage meticulously but also subject him to long bouts of questioning and degrading body searches. Paul Robeson was up in arms whenever he thought about such things, but what could he do?

In 1928 Paul Robeson became known throughout the world as the young actor in the musical "Show Boat" with his song "Ol' Man River". Later on the more mature Robeson interpreted this song anew, changing the original version to instead of

"If you get a little drunk,
you'll land in jail.
I am sick of trying,
I'm tired of living
and feared of dying."
he now sang
"You show a little grit and you land in jail.
But I keep laughing,
instead of crying.
I must keep fighting,
until I'm dying."

Blacks who showed guts and struggled, particularly if they defended their class position and opposed anti-Sovietism had always been subject to special reprisals in the United States. And thus precisely that happened what Robeson had expected. The customs' officials set upon him at once. On searching his body on this occasion they found a sealed letter. It seems that Robeson was visibly surprised for he was obviously shocked. "Open the letter", screamed the customs' officials excitedly. Once and for all they anticipated sensational evidence against the well-known artist. "On now account", Robeson screamed back, adding, "The contents of this letter have nothing whatsoever to do with you!"

The custom's official was sure of himself. He insisted that Robeson open the letter and show it to him. But before he intervened Robeson had taken the letter and torn it into hundreds of tiny shreds. But perhaps Robeson had underestimated the veritable degree of resolution of the American customs! Now after clear evidence had been revealed, or so they imagined, in order to prove guilty this so dangerous artist there was no relenting. Each paper shred was carefully collected and placed into a plastic bag which was then sealed and taken to the FBI headquarters. There the paper snippets were pieced together in a very time-consuming operation. And when, finally, this masterpiece of criminalistic scrupulous exactitude could be read the FBI agents faced: Flash in the pan! Yours Paul Robeson.

Then came the McCarthy period. The "House Unamerican Activities Committee" demanded that Robeson condemn the "inhuman practices in the Soviet Union". And Robeson condemned not the Soviet Union but the McCarthy committee, the Cold War and anti-Sovietism. Then came the counter-revolution in Hungary. Once again Robeson found himself pressed to raise his voice against the "lack of freedom in the socialist countries". And Robeson raised his voice - but against the counter-revolution and anti-communism.

But the class struggle took its toll also from Robeson. In the early sixties he became seriously ill. Soon the bourgeois press in the United States found out it was a "political illness". Robeson they maintained had finally drawn the consequences and protested against the "undemocratic conditions" in the Soviet Union and the other socialist states. Thereupon he had been taken to a London sanatorium in order to silence him. But there was a lack of convincing evidence for such reports.

In the summer of 1963 London newspapers in red-letter capitals wrote sensationally that Robeson had been kidnapped behind the "Iron Curtain"! Under strictest security camouflage he had been taken to East Berlin by a Polish LOT plane. In Schönefeld a large, black Russian limousine had been standing alerted at the gangway. Two evil-looking Russian secret agents were alleged to have been sitting in the car who then took him into custody at once. Since then he had vanished behind the "Iron Curtain" and nobody had heard anything further of him.

The two "evil-looking Soviet secret agents" had been Heinz Willmann, former General Secretary of the GDR Peace Council and I. Essie Robeson, Paul's wife had heard of Professor Baumann's famous clinic in Berlin and written to me asking if it were not possible for her husband to be treated there. So we picked up Paul and Essie at Schönefeld and took them to Professor Baumann's clinic. Robeson's health improved too and he returned to the US with Essie.

In these years, too, there was no shortage of bids to move him to take an anti-communist position. Representatives of that hue of "communists" who maintain to struggle for socialism by approaching the class enemy with their qualms and, in this manner, knowingly or unknowingly becoming the accomplices of counter-revolution sought to drag Paul Robeson to their side. But irrespective of how they disguised themselves Robeson would have nothing to do with them.

This unswerwingness and other factors too were the elements which moulded this people's singer into our unforgettable Paul Robeson.

Moscow Acclaims Paul Robeson
By SAM RUSSELL
Moscow, August 16, 1958

An enthusiastic Moscow crowd mobbed the world-famous Negro singer Paul Robeson and his wife when they arrived here today by T. U. 104 jet plane from Brussells. An official reception party was swept aside and it was some time before he could make his way to his car.

Leading Soviet singers, writers, stage artists and the Minister of Culture were at the airport to greet Paul Robeson, as well as 100 reporters, cameramen and radio and television reporters. They had to take their chance with the rest to get a handshake from Paul. By the time the welcome was over his face could hardly be seen amid the mass of flowers that had been handed to him.

But this welcome is nothing to what awaits him on Sunday when he is due to have his first concert at the Palace of Sports, which holds 18,000 people.

Although not a single advertisement or announcement of the concert has so far appeared, word has got round and this evening there were already long queues at the box office.

Leading Soviet newspapers like Pravda, Izvestia and others this morning had special welcoming articles announcing the new of his arrival.

Izvestia said: "He is a tireless fighter for the rights and dignity of man whatever the color of his skin. Paul Robeson has raised his voice in protest against racial discrimination, against the forces of fascism, war and oppression and has taken his place in the front rank of the champions of the great cause of peace.

We have waited a long time for Paul Robeson and in his person we greet a great man, and a great artist who has given all his strength and all his talent for the great struggle for the bright future of humanity."

Heartwarming Memories
By SHIRLEY GRAHAM DUBOIS

Whenever I think of Paul Robeson and my husband together I think of gladness. This was the ever constant quality which seemed to flow between them. They were always glad to be alive - glad to be in the fight - glad to be together. And this was true whether they were on a platform facing thousands of people or alone in our sitting room.

I see Paul standing before the wide fireplace looking up at the life-size painting of Frederick Douglass - it was a high ceilinged room, big enough for Paul. My husband would be stretched out in his easy chair, his eyes either on the glowing logs or liftet to Paul's face. They would be talking - talking about anything and everything. And always their talk was punctuated with laughter - Paul's deep-throated rumble sometimes bursting forth in a flood, and W. E. B.'s amusing chuckle of delight.

Vivid memories crowd in on me. I'll relate two incidents: It was in the month of May, 1959. Paul was playing Othello at Stratford-on-Avon when we arrived in London. Of course, we wanted to see it. But all tickets had been sold out long ago. Paul was living for the season at Stratford-on-Avon. Fortunately, Essie was commuting and heard of our plight. Within a few days we were invited to Stratford-on-Avon for a performance and to spend the night with Paul.

I shall not here describe that unforgettable evening, the enthusiastic crowds, the hush throughout the theatre when, for the first time Paul's voice was heard, his magnificent performance! Afterwards he took us to dinner where all the diners stood up at his appearance and the orchestra played a special "welcome" to him. I want to tell about the train trip back to London.

Paul had to go up to London the next morning for a television appearance and so he accompanied us. School children surrounded him even before we boarded the train. As soon as it began to move there was a constant stream of passengers walking by our compartment, straining their eyes just to catch a glimpse of Paul. After a while some of the bolder ventured to open the door and ask if they might speak to him. Paul turned nobody away, he was always gracious, smiling and kind. But as soon as they had greeted him, he would turn to my husband and say, "Now, I want you to meet a really great man, a scholar, a writer, a philosopher, the man who has inspired me all my life, Dr. W. E. B. DuBois!" The slightly bewildered Robeson fan would find himself shaking hands with someone who didn't look the least like Paul, while Paul's big voice boomed on about DuBois! When we reached the station and Paul had to dash off to his appointment, my husband tried to thank him for everything. His big smile embraced us as he said, "I am honored that you came, doctor!" And that's our Paul!

The other incident occurred on the last night of the year, 1958, in Moscow. We had been in the USSR for a couple of months, the last weeks at Barveka, that beautiful sanitarium and rest home where my husband had been having a physical check-up. They had prepared a special Christmas dinner for us there (I supervised cooking of the turkey, American style) and we returned to Moscow in time for the New Year's Eve Dinner and Concert at the Kremlin.

We know that Paul and Essie had arrived in Moscow and we were looking forward to seeing them at the Kremlin. W. E. B. was always a stickler for being ahead of time, so we were seated in our places in the great hall when I saw Essie and Paul arrive. They were taken to a table on the fartherest side of the hall from us. I saw Paul look around and in a moment he saw me waving at him. Paul stood up; my husband stood up; and the two made their way towards each other, weaving between the crowded tables. People stopped talking and tried to see. There in the middle of the brilliantly lighted banquet hall, big Paul and little W. E. B. met and clasped their arms around each other. Everybody in the hall, including the Premier and High Officials, rose to their feet, applauding and cheering. After a moment of rather stunned surprise, as if for the first time, they noticed where they were, the two friends turned towards their vast audiance and began to laugh!

My Memories of Paul Robeson
By HILDE EISLER

I should like to use two personal experiences to demonstrate to you what the quite ordinary, everyday racism of the American brand means. I was confronted with it when, after imprisonment and persecution by the fascist racists in Germany, I was living as a refugee in the United States. After my arrival in 1941 I had to earn my living and I was sent to a large office of the Clothing Workers' Union which was run by Social Democrats. I worked in an office where a great many girls and women, whose job it was to keep wage and salary lists of tectile factories, sat at calculating machine. In the last row there was an empty stool next to a young negress. The supervisor asked me on my

arrival whether I would mind sitting next to the negress. I was flabbergasted at this question, it hit me like a blow, and I answered: "But goodness me, of course I don't mind. I have no objection whatsoever to sitting next to a negress." Now it was the supervisor's turn to be astonished. She looked at me as though she wanted to say: "You European greenhorn, it won't be long before you learn the American way of life too!"

A few years later the hot war had ended and the cold war started. The US imperialists were trying their utmost to transform the deep sympathy of the American people for the people of the Soviet Union, who had put up such an heroic fight, into hatred and also to discredit the Communist Party of the USA, using the wild allegation that the Party was actually led by an agent of the Kremlin, a foreigner, a German Communist. They picked on my husband, the German Communist Gerhard Eisler, as their scapegoat and intended to involve him in a monster trial meant, as I said, to transform the peoples' sympathy for the Soviet Union and the socialist countries into hatred. My husband had to stand trial several times in Washington, the capital of the United States. His attorneys asked the outstanding workers' leader Ben Davis, himself a lawyer and alderman of the borough of Harlem, to testify in Washington as a witness for the defence. It was then that we were faced with the following dilemma: The hotel in which we were staying was closed to Ben Davis because of his black skin. It was equally impossible to discuss the issues of the trial with him in a restaurant or café for he was also not admitted to such places. Nor was it advisable to go into Washington's black ghetto area - we would have been too conspicuous and FBI informers would have spotted us. The only way out was to go with Ben Davis and our attorneys to a park and to discuss all we had to talk about sitting on a bench. When the time came for Ben Davis to return to the airport to catch a plane for New York, it was the alleged Kremlin agent, the boss of all Reds, the atomspy and what have you, who had to stop a taxi for him, because if Ben Davis had hailed a taxi himself it would just have passed by without stopping.

My greatest and most unforgettable experiences in the United States were my meetings with Paul Robeson, both in a small circle and at great mass meetings. For me three concepts are synonymous - Russian war relief, Madison Square Garden and Paul Robeson. During the war an Aid for Russia Committee was set up which held mass meetings in the largest sports arena in New York, Madison Square Garden (which holds some 25,000 people), to arouse the sympathy of the American people for the heroic Soviet people, to collect funds and, subsequently, to demand the opening of a second front. It was sympathy for the Soviet people which filled Madison Square Garden but also and by no means least, Paul Robeson. At each of those rallies he sang his songs, his spirituals, his fighting songs, the songs of the Red Army in Russian and working class songs by Hanns Eisler in German. The impact of his performances was so overpowering that it is hard to describe. His power to enthral people by his singing, by his speeches and by his passion and his great love for the Soviet Union, which he expressed time and again from East Coast to West at innumerable meetings, was simply overwhelming. I can hardly believe that there is another artist of his stature alive who combines such high artistic skill, such profound humanity and such deep commitment to progress, to the liberation of the oppressed and to socialism. When speaking about Paul Robeson where do you begin and end?

VI. A VICTORY OF THE INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

Paul Robeson Singing Again, Great, Powerful Press Notice, published in "Union", Sacramento, California, October 27, 1957

After an absence of seven or eight years Paul Robeson is back on the concert stage. He returns with power of voice and conviction, but there is a new gentleness in his human concern and a new dimension to his music. He sang in Sacramento Friday night to a capacity audience at St. Paul's Baptist Church. It was evident that he came and conquered.

Of course, nobody can sing like Paul Robeson. He has a deep-toned resonance which he controls with clarity and ease. When he sang "Water Boy" and "Ol' Man River", the delight of the audience showed that their expectations had been met, that their memories of that voice need no longer range back 10 or 20 years.

But Robeson's appeal is more than a matter of voice. It is the man who sings, and it is the man who is impressive in his dignity and gentleness.

He came into the concert with such caution that it seems fair to assume that he has been a tired and troubled man. But as his power showed itself in song, ranging from the classical through folk music expressive of the love of life, freedom and laughter, he gained something from the response of those for whom he sang.

The program included songs in French, German, Polish, Norwegian, Spanish, Russian and Hebrew and English, too, and in the language of the workers whose with oar or hammer are eased by the rhythmical impetus of simple melody.

Robeson Makes Triumphal Return By THOMAS ALBRIGHT published in "San Francisco Chronicle", February 10, 1958

After a long absence Paul Robeson returned to the Bay Area concert scene and proved the years have done virtually nothing to the greatest natural basso voice of the present generation. Nor have they done anything at all to one of its most magnetic stage presences.

From the opening moment, when he led the crowd in the "Negro national anthem", "Lift Every Voice and Sing" until the program closed, Robeson held a full house spellbound and radiated a miraculous something, that actually brings tears to the eyes.

As far as interpretation, Robeson communicated everything from Schubert's "Sleep, My Little One" to Chinese, Yiddish and Russian folk songs and "I Dreamed I Saw Joe Hill Last Night," an inevitable encore, with incomparable artistry. His footstamping, hand-swinging version of "The Volga Boatman" left the audience almost as exhausted as Robeson himself, and the beautifully modulated singing of a Bach chorale and the "All Men Are Brothers" choral melody of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony was simple and sincere.

Robeson spat out the words of "Zog Nit Keynmol," a Yiddish folk song, as if he had accidentally swallowed a handful of nails; he floated the pianissimo melody of the Largo from Dvorak's Fifth Symphony with such feeling that a person next to me sat quietly crying while the crowd applauded.

Paul Robeson Sings and Lectures in Carnegie Hall By HAROLD C. SCHONBERG

About twenty policemen were stationed outside Carnegie Hall last night, where Paul Robeson was giving his first local recital in eleven years. Their presence was unnecessary. The audience, which completely filled the hall, was orderly, and there were no demonstrations outside. And so the police went home about 9:15 p. m.

When Mr. Robeson made his appearance, he was greeted with a long standing ovation. Dressed in a dinner jacket, instead of the customary tails of recitalists, he remains a burly, imposing figure with tremendous dignity.

It would be forcing a point to call this event a recital. Mr. Robeson sang, lectured, even danced a tiny bit, and on one occasion recited the concluding lines of Shakespeare's "Othello," a role that was one of his great successes in the past. Occasionally he asked the audience to join with him in the singing.

His voice occasionally showed the mellowness and depth that he possessed a generation ago. Mr. Robeson was, after all, 60 years old last April 9, and it would be expecting too much to hear the voice of an artist in his prime.

He sang in several languages - English, German, Russian, Hebrew, Yiddish and even Chinese. The repertory he chose was a mingling of folk and art songs, with the folk greatly predominant.

There were a few departures from the expected vocal texts. Singing the main theme of the last movement of Beethoven's Ninth, Mr. Robeson came up with "March beside me, O my brothers, all for one and one for all," which is not exactly an accurate translation of the original Schiller text. "Glory, Glory, Hallelujah," contained references to "the American working folk."

As a lecturer, Mr. Robeson was superb - frequently witty, sonorous, completely uninhibited. He gave the audience a lecture on the relationships between African and Chinese music, saying he wanted to relate the music of his own people to the music of all the world.

He illustrated by singing brief excerpts without the assistance of his pianist, Alan Booth, and even his singing at these moments sounded freer and more natural than in the more studied musical part of his program.

And the most musical vocalism of all came not in the singing but in the brief "Othello" excerpt. Mr. Robeson's shading, his magnificent diction, his effective use of pauses and the sheer color of his speaking voice showed more art and vocal resource than anything heard during the musical portion of the program.

Mr. Robeson sang three encores, among them "Joe Hill," at which the audience started to applaud before he got into the music. He made a brief speech, thanking the audience for coming and expressing great pleasure on "being back on the job," and he ended the evening with a recitation of Pablo Neruda's "The Rail Splitter."

Purely Personal!
London – just before Christmas, 1958
By ESLANDA ROBESON

I' ve lost the passport. THE PASSPORT. Paul' s passport that took eight years of struggle, thousands of dollars of court fees, a world campaign and a Supreme Court Decision to secure. I can' t find it anywhere.

I had spent the day packing Paul' s suitcases for the big trip to Prague, Moscow and India. Winter clothes, summer clothes, music, books, everything he will need. Then I spent the evening packing, ditto, for myself. Finished, exhausted, I sat down for a breather, and said to Paul: "We' re all set for the trip. Tickets, money, instructions. Now give me your passport, I' ll put it with mine, and we' ll be ready to take off in the morning."

"My passport?" Paul asked in astronishment; "what do you mean ' give you my passport' . You' ve always had it. I' ve never had it except for those first few days when I kept it just to look at and pat, to make sure it was real. You have it."

It is true that I' ve always kept his passport with mine in a safe place. I' d given them over on two occasions to Harold Davidson, our agent and manager, to have them stamped for the British Work Permit. Maybe he still had Paul' s?? We had moved from Maida Vale to Connaught Square, then I' d gone off to New York to the United Nations by myself; returned to London, and gone off to Ghana, again by myself. Of course I did not take Paul' s passport with me. I must have put it in a safe place, or mis-placed it.

I spent four hours searching the flat for the passport, and just could not find it. By then I was panic-stricken,- a rare state for me. So I woke up Paul and told him the bad news. I could not find the passport anywhere. Paul was surprisingly calm. He got out of bed sleepily: "Never mind. It must be here in the flat. I' ll help you look for it." So we both looked. Everywhere. No passport.

"Are you sure it' s here?" Paul asked me later, over coffee. "If Harold Davidson hasn' t got it, it has to be here", I replied. We telephoned Harold as early as we dared, and he said, sleepily: "No, I haven' t got it. I remember returning it to you, Essie, after I got the Work Permit", but he got up anyway to look in his safe to make sure. No. It wasn' t there. "Essie", he said reassuringly, "it must be in the flat." I said yes, I know, but where? I have always carried the passports and never lost one. I simply couldn' t lose it, especially this particular passport. It is just misplaced."

"Well", said Paul practically, "it' s nearly time to leave. Let' s start without it, and see how far we get. We' re booked for Television and Radio performances in Prague tomorrow night. (Christmas Eve) and they are waiting now for us. We' re due in Moscow for New Year' s Eve, and then we' re due in India for our first visit. They all know us, and I don' t believe they will keep us out because I don' t have my passport with me. They all know I own one, because they helped me to get it. Somewhere along the way, if necessary, we' ll stop in at an American Consulate and apply for a temporary Travel Permit."

We telephoned to Prague, explained the situation, and they said never mind the passport, Come. Come. So we decided to make a try.

At the London Airport where we boarded the plane for Prague, I told my tale of woe to the British Immigration officials. They know Paul, I had my own passport, they were very understanding, and signed him out. That was Tuesday morning, December 23 rd.

The flight to Prague began normally, but in about an hour the sky itself seemed to come down, clouds closed in all around us and fog was everywhere. Prague Airport radioed: No visibility. No landings. Our proceeded to Zurich, the nearest stop, and put us down with optimistic assurances about "connections" to Prague the following morning.

I told my tale to the Swiss Immigration authorities, and since we were merely passing through, they admitted Paul, and we slept in a beautiful hotel in Zurich. By next morning, Christmas Eve, storms had developed everywhere. Fog blanketed Eastern Europe, it was spreading, and more and more airports were closing down. The storm grew worse, the fog became more dense.

At noon we telephoned to the Prague Radio station. They reported, disconsolately, that all airports in Czechoslovakia were closed in by fog and that the weather experts predicted more and worse fog for two more days.

Paul began worrying about being among strangers for two days without a passport. I checked with the Zurich airport and found that a British European Airways plane was taking off, weather permitting, at 3 pm for London. So I said: We' ve missed the television and radio shows. Let' s try to make it back to London, spend Christmas there, and I' ll take my time and search once more for the passport. If I can' t find it we can apply for a new one. Paul agreed, I picked up the last two seats on the plane for London, and we were off.

The weather was foul. The plane radio reported that London Airport was closed in by fog. The pilot told the passengers he would have to put us down in Paris, which was still open. Paul in Paris with no passport, me with no French visa, and tomorrow would be Christmas Day!! Our hearts sank. But looking at the pea-soup sky, we decided we' d be lucky to land anywhere.

But the British passengers and crew wanted very much to be home for Christmas. Try the other British airports, they suggested. Manchester reported closed in. Gastwick ditto. Southend-On-Sea reported still slear but closing down for the night. Wait for us, radioed the pilot, and an hour later we put down safely at the lovely little airport at Southend, about 40 miles from London. But the British Immigration officials who had so kindly signed Paul out were at London Airport! However, the authorities at Southend recognized Paul (and, said one: If we had any doubts we could always ask you to sing a few bars of Ol' Man River). They gave Paul an Emergency Entry Permit, and we were in. We found a car and drove to London, complete with our eleven pieces of luggage.

The following day I took the flat apart, room by room, drawer by drawer, file by file. The fact that books and papers were all on the floor, and the builder' s boards were stacked everywhere for the bookcases which were being put up, added to the confusion. But I took my time, unpacked, checked, rearranged and organized every corner of the flat, and then, suddenly, THERE WAS THE PASSPORT. I' d found it. I was so relieved, I sat down in the middle of the floor and cried.

Next day we started out once more, this time complete with both passports. Since it was much too late for Prague, we went by jet from London direct to Moscow. We had an unforgettable celebration of the New Year together with our friends in the gorgeous St. Georges Hall in the Kremlin Palace.

You can never tell what the future will bring. Needless to say, the passports are always with me.

VII. PAUL ROBESON'S LEGACY

Paul Robeson
By JAMES BROWN

Let the residue of his quiet majesty
linger peacefully over all - and sustain us

Let the memory of his powerful voice echo
like thunder across the universe bidding
adieu to racism

Let the telling affirmation of his life
be a shining example of exactness which
our children can strive to emulate

Let his unquiet temper kindle a dying flame
among us and bestow in us a will and resolution
to fight back until the day be done

Let his wisdom fill our ranks with unyielding
motivation and inspiration

Let the sum total of his life, like a beacon
in the sky guide us, one and all, toward
replenished shores

Let future historians write of him in all
his grandeur, spirited acclaim, wonder and
heroic dimensions ...

Finally,
Let his life be a yardstick
by which our degree of blackness is measured

Reprint from "Freedomways", No. 3/1976

The Voice of Paul Robeson
By VLADIMIR POZNER
published in "Die Weltbühne", 1976

The twentieth century caused many emigrations: in 1933 German writers had fled to Paris and ten years later French writers in large numbers left their country meanwhile occupied by the nazis. After I had rolled along French roads as a military driver I was subsequently assembling iron plates in the docks at Richmond in California before settling in Los Angeles, a town which had become a new Weimar.

One Sunday we crossed the Bay of San Francisco to visit a friend. There were many guests in the living room from which one could see the seven hills of the city and the Pacific ocean, among them professors from the university and members of the dockworkers' union. Suddenly there was absolute silence. And then they all began talking at once: a man had entered.

He had broad, light hands and a fine head set upon broad shoulders which he bore so high that one had to step back a certain distance to see him properly just as if he were a mountain, a laughing mountain who then dropped himself into an arm-chair and began consuming large quantities of chocolate ice-cream, his favorite dish.

I had already seen him before the war on the screen in Paris and I knew his voice which had carried around the world. I knew that his father, a negro, parson and slave had fled from the southern states in order to live in freedom and that Paul, who had grown up in relative freedom had become a football champion, later a jurist and finally an actor and singer. It was impossible not to recognize his voice again, not only because it was a bass voice, probably the deepest bass in the world but equally because of the words he spoke. He never forgot that the people of his race were mercilessly subject to every abject form of discrimination, moreover that to be poor was an even greater evil than to be black and he drew the commensurate conclusions.

A relationship was to develop between ourselves notwithstanding the long inbetween distance. I had returned to Paris and he was not permitted to leave the United States for his passport had been withdrawn. Only his voice overcame the frontiers, the Canadian border in the close vicinity of which he gave a concert in the open air and the frontiers of all countries, by means of records.

I was fortunate to be able to join him over a distance of five thousand kilometres. He jotted down the episode in his diary and I did the same. It is a story that fits him and it is worthwhile recounting it here.

Joris Ivens concluded work on the film "The Song of the Rivers" to which I had written the scenario. Brecht had written the text of the great song and Shostakovitch was the composer. Now the song had to be sung. The ideal interpreter would have been Robeson but he was not allowed to travel. I wrote to him none the less just on chance. Three days later I received a telegram: "Happy and honored to accept your proposal. Greetings to all friends. Paul Robeson."

He brought things to a good end just as one produces a leaflet under illegal operating conditions. One evening all the film collaborators assembled around the thin, small tape strip which had come to us over the ocean. Then, all of a sudden Paul Robeson's voice filled the room. He sang just as one breathed. Through my tears I saw that the others too had tears in their eyes.

We saw each other again, first in London and later in Berlin. He was already ill. His wife had to protect him and soon he lost her.

I was one of the few persons allowed to visit him in hospital. The smile and the hand-shake were unchanged. But the voice was quieter. Paul Robeson had reached the age when the voice leaves the singer. None the less his voice accompanies us still, close and in a fraternal manner.

Paul Robeson's Legacy in the German Democratic Republic
By BRIGITTE BOEGELSACK

When Paul Robeson had his passport returned in 1958 following years of world-wide protests he travelled immediately to Europe. The US Supreme Court had required eight long years to finally reach the decision that no citizen should be banned from leaving the country because of his color or political convictions. Throughout this period he had not been able to give a single concert nor to appear on the stage; neither had he been permitted to participate in world congresses of peace fighters and the World Youth Festivals.

Then, in the Summer of 1959 he was the most prominent guest of the World Festival of Youth and Students in Vienna. Here, too, was his first encounter with a delegation from the first German workers' and farmers' state. How different had been another encounter with Germans 25 years earlier in Berlin. On that occasion Paul Robeson was on his first journey to Moscow. During a long stopover in Berlin he, his wife and Marie Seton, a white writer accompanying the couple were subject to angry looks and insults in the hotel and on the streets whilst at Friedrichstrasse station bodily assaults by SA thugs were only prevented by the arrival of the train to Moscow. Robeson only found his inner peace again beyond the border of Hitler's "Thousand Year Reich".

In Vienna he was given a very cordial welcome in the headquarters of the GDR delegation, in Camp Rohrerbad and the young friends took him at his word that he would soon visit the GDR.

A year later he said in Berlin: "Now I am here to fulfil my promise. One cannot disappoint the youth!"

The press festival of "Neues Deutschland" was a hopelessly rainy event but our friend sang us his songs from an open-air stage on the Marx-Engels-Square and the downpour proved unable to in the least smother the enthusiastic applause of his great audience.

In October of the same year he returned to celebrate the 11th anniversary of the foundation of the GDR with us. He convinced himself of the unconditional desire for peace and the honest wish of our people to live in friendship with all peoples and races on this earth. He received many distinctions: Paul Robeson was the first-ever recipient of the high GDR state award, the "Star of Friendship amongst the Peoples"; the Humboldt University bestowed on him an Honorary Doctorate of the philosophical faculty and the GDR Peace Council awarded the peace medal of the GDR to the foundation member of the World Peace Council. And now the Academy of Arts, in a festive ceremony, was able to hand him his certificate of appointment as a corresponding member which had already taken place in 1956. At that time Paul Robeson was still a "private prisoner" of Mr. Dulles and therefore robbed of the possibility to pass beyond the famous "Statue of Liberty" of his country to another state which desired to honor him as an artist and fighter for peace. Paul Robeson was deeply moved by the great cordiality and recognition he had encountered in the GDR.

In 1960, during a visit to the workers of the Elektro-Apparate Werke Berlin-Treptow, he said as the workers gave him a stormy reception: "I feel very much at home amongst Berlin workers. I understand the struggle of your people and also perceive that it must be linked to the struggle for the liberation of the international working class."

To mark this visit of Paul Robeson to one of the biggest enterprises in our capital one work-team selected the name "Paul Robeson" as its designation. The turner Erwin Wirsing wrote in this connexion: "When the formation of work-teams was on the agenda in our enterprise years ago we decided after several discussions to give our work-team the honorable name "Paul Robeson". All of us, fifteen colleagues in the mechanical assembly section of the works were all agreed that the name "Paul Robeson" symbolized a great obligation we had undertaken.

Following years of professional experience we know our working activities well. Paul Robeson was known to us as a singer and peace fighter and some colleagues knew him as a result of his visit to the Elektro-Apparate Werke.

At that time we decided to preoccupy ourselves with the life of Paul Robeson. We organized discussion evenings and learnt more about Paul Robeson and his influence as a peace fighter. We arranged record evenings with the friendly assistance of the Paul-Robeson-Archive of the Academy of Arts and, in this manner, also got to know Paul Robeson as a great singer.

That wasn't easy for us for we had had a strenuous working day on machine tools. But all the colleagues were very attentive and there were lots of discussions after such record evenings. And thus we discovered more about Paul Robeson and his activities and are today able to pass on our knowledge to other colleagues.

On several occasions our "Paul Robeson" work-team was the winner in socialist emulation in our enterprise section. We were also successful in gaining the state award "Team of Socialist Labor". All our colleagues are at hand when it becomes necessary to overcome bottlenecks in our production sequence. So I can state without exaggeration and with pride that we have developed well as a collective. We also promoted human contacts between ourselves. This is evidenced when, for example, a colleague needs help or when we go together with our wives to a theatrical performance or with our families to our factory home for longer celebrations. This is a grand thing for we have become a big family with one helping the other. And all this began with Paul Robeson. Today in the GDR we live and work for the goals for which he struggled a whole lifetime - unity of the working class, equality for all, peace and socialism."

This is not the only "Paul Robeson" work-team in the GDR.

Anyone who has seen Paul Robeson was hardly able to comprehend the news of his serious illness in 1963. A lifetime of persisting struggle, of persecution and defamation had not bypassed this big, strong man, the "highest tree in our wood" as he was respectfully and lovingly refered to by his black people and not only because of his height. He was compelled to rest and to completely withdraw. The Peace Council of the GDR invited him and his similarly ailing wife Eslanda for a longer stay in our country. As Paul Robeson arrived at Berlin-Schönefeld airport, coming from London, assiduous London journalists had already concocted pious headlines such as "Robeson kidnapped" and "Robeson kidnapped behind the Iron Curtain" as part and parcel of diabolical hate tirades of anti-communist venom directed against Paul Robeson's principled position.

After several months of medical treatment in the GDR Paul Robeson returned home in 1963 with his wife Eslanda. However his friends in the GDR had perceived full of anguish that the strength of this exceptional person, this giant in size and voice, spirit, courage and humanity had been irrepairably sapped. Our state agreed, on their suggestion, to found a Paul Robeson Committee which was then established in 1964. This committee set itself the task to set up an archive at the Academy of Arts to assemble there documentary material about Paul Robeson's artistic achievements and his influence as a fighter for peace and human rights, for friendship amongst the peoples and proletarian internationalism and to retain and make usable such information. The material was spread over wide areas of the world and the staff members of the Robeson Arcive have been trying since 1965 to unearth it and to obtain it from Robeson's friends and admirers in New Zealand and Australia, Japan and India, the Soviet Union, the United States and Canada as well as in most European countries.

Robeson's friends sent us enthusiastic letters and wished us well for this project as well as recounting their recollections of the great artist.

We are collecting records and tapes, photographs, articles from newspapers and periodicals, books, pamphlets, letters and documents in writing or on tape, reminiscences of friends about personal encounters with him, posters, programs as well as written matter by and about Paul and Eslanda Robeson.

In April 1967, on the occasion of Paul's 69th birthday we appeared publically for the first time with a

matinee. We showed the film "Native Land" which had been produced in 1942 in the United States under Paul Strand. This semidocumentary depicts the often seemingly hopeless struggle of ordinary folk against corruption, against miserably bad working and living conditions has a commentary by Paul Robeson who also sings two songs. It was possible to have a small exhibition in which the records and books collected by that time could be shown.

The next year we marked the 70th birthday of our friend. Meanwhile we had been able to collect a rich selection of material and were able to undertake a first evaluation. We were thus in a position to prepare a representative exhibition showing in word and picture Paul Robeson' s artistic achievements, his political development and his struggle for peace and equality, against fascism and racism and, in this conjunction, to pay tribute to the relationship of his personality and life to the international working class. Some 60, 000 interested persons in Berlin and other GDR cities saw this exhibition and enriched their knowledge about this great son of the American people who enthused millions of people all over the world by his art which he understood to employ in a unique manner as weapon in the struggle for human rights. Many press reports and entries in our guest book confirmed that the exhibition had aptly served to arouse a feeling of alliance and solidarity with those peoples still struggling for their freedom and equality.

There was also a program booklet to the exhibition which had been arranged by the internationally-known creator of the photographic assembly technique John Heartfield. A newly released record "Paul Robeson - an American Ballad" was soon sold out and had to be reprinted. Artists from the GDR, Vietnam, the United States and Greece participated in a festive ceremony to honor Robeson' s 70th birthday which took place in the State Opera in Berlin, and in the course of which he was lauded as a singer of peace and a great internationalist.

In November 1970 we prepared a further extensive exhibition which we gave as a present to the Soviet Union. Initially it went to Usbekistan and was viewed by 160, 000 visitors, amongst others in the towns of Taschkent, Samarkand and Buchara. Many people in Taschkent recalled Robeson' s visit in 1958 when he was a guest of honor at the Afro-Asian Film Festival and gave a concert in the Pachtakor Stadium. The press and television in Usbekistan reported in great detail on the Robeson exhibition. A group of American tourists which was in Taschkent at the time accepted an invitation to view the exhibition about their famous countryman. Many of them heard the name "Paul Robeson" for the first time.

The civil rights movement in the United States assumed greater proportions and encountered increasing difficulties. Lynch murders were on the agenda and Angela Davis, together with many of her comrades, was thrown into prison. In order to honor Paul Robeson as a pioneer fighter of this movement and to express our solidarity with the couragious fighters of the Black Liberation Movement as well as to protest against the imprisonment of Angela Davis and her compatriots we arranged a two-day scientific conference with international guests during Robeson' s birthday month of April 1971.

Scientifically-founded contributions reiterated the significance of Robeson' s artistic and, above all, political development and underlined his realisation in the thirties in England and in the Soviet Union that the liberation of the colored people is not merely a racial but a class question and that this struggle can only be victorious in alliance with the working class.

A protocol of this remarkable conference was published in English and German. Good relations exist between the Robeson Committee and Archive and the Humboldt University in Berlin. Many students of English and American philology have undertaken diploma assignments and annual work projects in connexion with Paul Robeson' s life and influence.

We marked Robeson' s 75th birthday with a festive event in the Berlin Stadtbibliothek in which many foreign guests participated. On television and in radio transmissions as well as in the press Robeson' s life was illustrated as an example and of importance for the present day liberation struggle in the United States.

In the summer of the same year the youth of the world staged their great World Youth Festival in Berlin - the tenth such festival. What was closer at hand than, together with the youth which had come to celebrate a festival of peace and friendship, to honor a man whose whole life had been at the service of peace and friendship with the peoples. Thus we prepared an event, hired Berlin artists and asked song and folklore groups from Africa, Italy, Hungary and the United States to cooperate with us in an evening under the motto "Paul Robeson - What is America to Me?"

The performance by the professional and amateur artists who used their songs to express the idea of human dignity and solidarity was excellently complemented by blended in film shots of "Paul Robeson with Us" - a film shot in 1960 on the occasion of his visit to the GDR and "Bridge Over the Ocean" (a film produced in 1957 for friends in Europe in which Paul Robeson and the composer and singer Earl Robinson present songs).

The contributions of our guests from Africa and the United States, Hungary and Italy were, alongside the artistic perfection, convincing above all because of the attitude adopted by the artists themselves in expressing in every tone and gesture the ideal expressed by the World Youth Festival.

The absolute highlight of this evening was, however, the appearance of Angela Davis. The Robeson Committee had already invited her much earlier on and now the well-known civil rights campaigner was met with indescribable acclamation. In German she told her audience how Paul Robeson had inspired her and her friends to fight as he had fought. She called him a resolute internationalist who, through his principled stand, had always been an example and thus had also contributed towards securing her freedom. She declared: "My brothers and sisters in the USA ought to be able to witness how Paul Robeson has been honored in the GDR as a revolutionary and respected as a human being."

Many hundreds of festival guests had found the hall already packed and waited patiently in front of the cinema, whiling the time away with songs for several hours in order to welcome Angela Davis after the meeting. By means of their many actions and signature collections they too had contributed to ensuring her release.

The World Youth Festival continued in the capital of our socialist state opening up daily new highlights in the joy of living and instilled by the strong desire of the young generation meeting there to help ensure permanent peace in the interests of mankind and to apply all their strength and resources for the promotion of friendship amongst all races and peoples. The motto of the Tenth World Festival "For Peace, Friendship and Anti-Imperialist Solidarity" was a matter of course for the participants from the socialist countries. The participants from the young national states, the still colonially oppressed countries and the imperialist states received stimuli from this festival to continue on their home ground with renewed enthusiasm the often apparently hopeless struggle for peace, freedom and equality.

Article 18 of the GDR Constitution stipulates: "... Socialist society preserves all humanist values of the national cultural heritage and of world culture ...". The art of Paul Robeson which he understood remarkably well to employ as a weapon in the struggle against fascism and racism is a component of world

culture. Under ' preservation of the cultural heritage' we comprehend not only the retaining of materials in archives but, above all, the spreading of this culture, its life contents, above all in order to bring forth a humanistically educated youth for whom the terms racism, chauvinism and war are strange and belong to the past.

For this reason, too, the English textbook in our secondary modern schools devotes a whole lesson text to Paul Robeson and similarly the reason why a secondary modern school in both Berlin and Leipzig bear the name "Paul Robeson" which in understood by teachers and pupils alike as an obligation.

The Berlin pupils wrote in an article: "Impressed by his passionate struggle for the rights of the oppressed and by his uncompromising fight for peace, understanding and the wellbeing of all people and the use of his art as a weapon we selected, for these reasons, Paul Robeson as our example."

For more than two years the almost 1,000 pupils at this Berlin school, helped by their teachers and assisted by the Robeson Archive, preoccupied themselves with the life and struggle of Paul Robeson until they felt themselves entitled to bear the honorable name "Paul Robeson Secondary Modern School".

In various subjects but above all in the afternoon sessions of the Young Pioneers and Free German Youth the pupils were told of the life of Paul Robeson and assigned small research projects in line with their age, for example:

- Paul Robeson' s childhood (from the history of slavery, the life of colored children in the USA, comparison with the life of children in the GDR);
- Paul Robeson, a successful sportsman (the role of colored sportsmen in the USA);
- Paul Robeson as world famous singer (spirituals, artistic and campaigning songs);
- Paul Robeson as anti-fascist and peace fighter (his participation in actions and congresses, important peace fighters Ethel and Julius Rosenberg, persecution by his enemies);
- Paul Robeson as civil rights fighter (his struggle against racial discrimination; aims and patterns of activities of the various American civil rights organizations, significant civil rights fighters Dr. Martin Luther King, Angela Davis, George Jackson);
- Paul Robeson as upright friend of the Soviet Union (his trips to the USSR, Russian language studies, the nationalities policy in the Soviet Union, the policy of international solidarity).

Through this intensive preoccupation with the life of Robeson children are encouraged to write themselves poems and songs on the subject of solidarity which they then can present at the school festivals which take place each April.

The first guests the pupils welcomed in their school were members of the US delegation in Berlin for the Tenth World Youth Festival. This visit was a great event both for the guests and for the pupils able to participate in the reception.

A delegation of the Black Press of America (National Newspaper Publishers Association) described their visit to the Paul Robeson Secondary Modern School in Berlin as a highlight of their study stay in the GDR. The pupils greeted their guests with the song "The ink is black the page is white" and the poem by Langston Hughes "I, too, Sing America" and then had a friendly discussion. The headmaster gave the guests a brief introduction into the educational system in the GDR and the children then guided their guests through their exhibition for which they had prepared during lessons drawings on themes such as "Peace for all Children of the World" and "Solidarity with all Children of the World".

In 1965 Paul and Elanda Robeson has given the Academy of Arts written authorization to establish the Paul Robeson Archive. They had so acted in full confidence in that German state which, following the war unleashed by Hitler Germany which had cost the life of almost every fiftieth person on earth, in selfless efforts and with the unstinted assistance of the Soviet Union had been able, in a historically extraordinary short period to root out fascism altogether and educate its youth to people who love peace and want to live in friendship with all peoples.

Everyone knows in the socialist state that the maintenance and safeguarding of peace is a decisive life question of humanity. Today more than ever since US President Carter and his vassals in Europe alongside him unleashed was what was supposed to be a spectacular torrent on human rights - which they demand for the peoples of other countries but not for their own population and, at the same time, are wielding the neutron bomb in order, thus, to enforce a new stage in the world armaments race. A mighty propaganda machine was brought into motion in order to tell the western countries that they are being threatened militarily by the socialist states. This lie is not new and was brandmarked already 28 years ago by Paul Robeson as anti-communist and, above all anti-Soviet, and described by him in many articles and meetings as the "Big Lie". In the "Einheit", vol. 9 - 1977 page 1055 Dieter Langner writes: "By means of this lie the consequent peace policy of the Soviet Union and the other socialist states on the one hand is to be discredited whilst, on the other hand, the striven for failure of détente by the aggressive circles of the NATO countries is to be blamed on the states of the Warsaw Pact." In a pamphlet written especially for the military-political manipulation of the young generation in the Federal Republic of Germany and containing a foreword by the "Federal Defence Minister" Georg Leber the authors - two Bundeswehr (FRG army) officers - admit openly: "If it is not possible to supply evidence of a threat to the West by the Warsaw Pact states then our entire work will be unworthy of belief right from the outset."

In 1937 Heinrich Mann wrote in his article "Realised Idea", published in "International Literature", Vol. 2, 1937: "One must differentiate between states which subordinate people to their aims and states which determine their aims in accordance with the aspirations of the people. The first category wage wars without there existing any necessity for the greater number of their population. The others want peace for they regard the life of their people and their work as well as the fruits of their labor, economic and cultural as of far greater importance than any advantage that any war is destined to bring to a state. The love of peace of the Soviet Union clearly emenates from the organic nature of that country for the Union has been created for the whole people instead of for a very few crazy persons who seek to profit at the expense of the majority. In states where the few dominate one teaches the masses a national superiority because this favors the enrichment of the ruling strata. The Union demonstrates patience in the face of differences of race, origin, language and, most probably, such a state is patient in its very structure because it is peaceloving in its very nature and because it exists for the benefit of the whole community but not in opposition to its interests ...

We have suffered a life long so very much under states which existed against us, in the face of our perception, despite our sensible knowledge of that which would be just and human. Finally a state sets about making of human beings what we have always wanted: sensible people who all together worked for the welfare of each individual and each shall become something better and greater within a society which continues to perfect itself. It makes one feel glad that there is such a state ..."

The just cited propaganda machine has to ensure that socialism in general and the socialist states in particular be discredited and reliable, objective information

about them simply denied. How else can it be possible in the United States in 1977 that a young woman could ask, following a talk about the life of women under socialism and a detailed discussion about such things as maternity leave, equal wages for women, the health services, child care etc.: "Could you please perhaps explain what socialism actually is?" (see Margrit Pittman, "Weltbühne" No. 27/1977, page 838). Margrit Pittman writes further: "Bourgeois propaganda in the United States has been able to conceal to a frightening extent the truth about socialism. That is, naturally, also a question of democracy; for decisions can presumably only be taken on the basis of information and knowledge."

Socialism means peace and socialism means the right to work. "For work is the first basic precondition of human life. To become productive is, after all the most human of all human traits" (Hermann Klenner, "Einheit", No. 9 - 1977, page 1,039).

After the Second World War Robeson demanded in a not to be overheard manner the right to work for his black brothers that had been promised them in order to send them as the first to the battlefields of Europe. For those who returned home there still applied "Last hired, first fired".

In the Final Act of the Helsinki Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe there is a decisive sentence: "The participating states recognize the universal significance of human rights and basic freedoms the respect of which is an important factor for peace, justice and welfare which are required for their part in order to ensure the development of friendly relations and cooperation between themselves as well as between all states."

The human rights cannot be divided into rights for white people and rights for Blacks. They are also not different for people living under socialist social conditions and people living under the imperialist social order. Everywhere they signify the right to live as a human being. And here President Carter and his vassals would surely have found a very extensive field of activity in their claims for human rights. In the face of growing unemployment in their own countries and the centuries-long racial discrimination in the USA this would have been no small task but one that brought no profits.

Karl Marx wrote already 100 years ago: "There must be something rotten in the very heart of a social system that muliplies its riches without lessening its poverty and in which crimes even increase more rapidly than the population. "Our comrade Lightfoot writes in the present booklet (page 14): "... the new times call for a greater emphasis of the international significance of the battle for Black Liberation in the United States." Let us understand these words as a cry for help for his people, for his country, as an appeal to us!

There are innumerable people who are examples to our youth in terms of courage and a principled stand. On thousands of occasions it ended with the sacrifice of these heroes for the cause of human dignity. During the dark night of fascism in Germany men and women grew to heroic proportions in the course of open struggle, in the prisons and concentration camps, in illegality. Paul Robeson is one of them. His uniqueness was that he employed his artistic skills in the international arena and, with his art, enraptured not only millions of people but shook and aroused the consciousness of thousands upon thousands.

For that reason we honor and love him and in the GDR we retain his legacy awake in manifold ways.

Notes on the Authors:

Thomas Albright, USA

Charles R. Allen, Jr. Author, USA

Brigitte Boegelsack, Chairperson of the Paul Robeson-Archives on the Academy of Arts of the German Democratic Republic

James Brown, USA

Lloyd L. Brown, Author, USA

Prof. Dr. Eberhard Bruening, Karl Marx-University, Leipzig, GDR

John Henrik Clarke, Associate Editor "Freedomways", USA

Prof. Dr. W. E. B. DuBois, Author, Historian, Politician, USA

Shirley Graham DuBois, Author, USA

Hilde Eisler, Chief Editor "Das Magazin", Berlin, GDR, Member of the Paul Robeson-Committee of German Democratic Republic

Prof. Dr. Igor Geyevski, Academy of Science of the Soviet Union

Sydney Gordon, Author, Canada/German Democratic Republic

Nicolás Guillén, Author, Corresponding Member of the Academy of Arts of the German Democratic Republic

Alex La Guma, Author, South Africa

Prof. Dr. Horst Ihde, Humboldt-University at Berlin, GDR, Member of the Paul Robeson-Committee of the German Democratic Republic

Claude M. Lightfoot, Member of the National Committee of the Communist Party of USA

Dr. Diana Loeser, Humboldt-University at Berlin, GDR

Prof. Dr. Franz Loeser, Humboldt-University at Berlin, GDR, Chairman of the Paul Robeson-Committee of the German Democratic Republic

Albert Maltz, Author, USA

Juan Marinello, Cuba

Prof. Albert Norden, Member of the Polit-Bureau of the Central Committee of the Socialist Unity Party, GDR Member of the Paul Robeson-Committee of the German Democratic Republic

William L. Patterson, Lawyer, Politician, Member of the National Committee of the Communist Party of USA

John Pittman, Member of the National Committee of the Communist Party of USA

Vladimir Pozner, Author, France

Eslanda Robeson, Anthropologist, Author, USA

Prof. Dr. h. c. Paul Robeson, Lawyer, Singer, Actor, USA

Sam Russell, USA

Harold C. Schonberg, USA